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MILITARY HISTORY JOURNAL

No 7, July 1988

Friendship of the Peoples of the USSR—A Most Important Source of Our Victories

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[Unsigned Article: Friendship of the Peoples of the USSR—A Most Important Source of Our Victories“]

[Text] Solving the national question is a most important, truly historic result of the socio-economic and cultural transformations accomplished in our state in the 70 years of Soviet power. The revolution confirmed not only the legal, but also the socio-economic equality of the nations. “One of the greatest gains of October,” noted comrade M. S. Gorbachev, general secretary of the CPSU Central Committee, “is the friendship of the Soviet people. In and of itself it is a unique phenomenon in world history. For us, it is one of the main supports of the might and durability of the Soviet state.”¹

The friendship and brotherhood of the peoples of our multinational homeland have a beneficial influence on the entire life and activity of army and navy collectives. It unites their ranks, and it helps them successfully master the complex equipment, weapons, and techniques of modern combat, and strengthen organization, discipline, and combat readiness.

Military collectives are the environment where young people best form attitudes of friendship, comradeship and mutual assistance. No matter where soldiers fulfill their constitutional duty, they are profoundly convinced that the fraternal friendship of the peoples is a mighty spiritual force of the defenders of the socialist fatherland, and an inexhaustible source of courage and valor.

The Soviet Armed Forces, created by V. I. Lenin and the Communist Party, are truly the people's armed forces in their socialist nature, and are intended for defense of the revolutionary gains and freedom of the workers, and for the preservation and stabilization of peace. They developed and were strengthened based on an alliance of the working class and the laboring peasantry, and of the friendship and fraternity of the peoples of the Land of the Soviets, as an armed organization conscious of its high international duty. The decree signed by V. I. Lenin creating the Red Army emphasized that service therein is an obligation of all Soviet citizens, without any limitations according to nationality. The consistent and firm conduct of Lenin's national policy in the field of military organizational development thereby confirmed in law.

The years of the Civil War and military intervention were harsh tests for the young Soviet republic and its Workers' and Peasants' Red Army. Our party united and mobilized the people to defend the socialist fatherland.

And they held out and defended the gains of October. In concerted armed struggle against imperialism and internal counterrevolution, the inviolable moral and political unity of the fraternal republics took shape, and the economic, political and ideological prerequisites arose for uniting the peoples into a single, multinational state.

The Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, formed in December 1922, was the notable result of the implementation of Lenin's national policy and the ideas of proletarian internationalism by the Communist Party. The voluntary combining of the Soviet republics into a mighty, united state ensured the all-round economic, socio-political and spiritual development of all the people in our country.

With the formation of the USSR, V. I. Lenin, the Communist Party and the Soviet Government continued to pay attention to questions of improving the organizational development of the Red Army. In June 1923 measures were worked out for organizing national military units in the republics and oblasts, and for creating military schools for the local population, which were to train competent commanders, loyal to the Soviet government.

The victory of socialism and equalization of the economic and cultural levels of the peoples of the USSR, and their further development, made it possible to pose anew the question of national formations in the Soviet Armed Forces. It was recognized that nationally mixed units and large units most fully meet the requirements for further strengthening the defense of the country, the friendship and combat cooperation of the peoples of the USSR, and the mastering of military affairs by the personnel. This was also stipulated by the complete transition of the Soviet Armed Forces in the late 1930s to a cadre system of organizational development and extra-terrestrial manning principles. Joint service by soldiers of different nationalities opened up still broader opportunities for strengthening the ties of brotherhood, and for reinforcing the subsequent education of the fighters and commanders in the spirit of Soviet patriotism and proletarian internationalism. The unbreakable alliance of the working class, peasantry and intelligentsia comprised the social basis for the friendship and brotherhood of the peoples, and for strengthening defense might. Elimination of the economic and cultural backwardness of former outlying national districts contributed to the rapid growth of the working class. It began to have a leading role in the life of each union republic. The peasantry started a new, socialist path of development. Its own intelligentsia took shape. These and other possessive changes in the social structure of the nations were reflected most beneficially and directly in the Armed Forces. In particular, the number of military personnel from the working class increased in the army and navy. For example, at the end of the 1930s from 40-50 percent of the soldiers and junior commanders were workers.² A new type of soldier was born—the Soviet soldier, a patriot, internationalist, and reliable defender of the socialist homeland.

With the beginning of the Great Patriotic War, the CPSU carried out gigantic organizational and ideological-political work of mobilizing all the Soviet peoples to defeat the enemy. The aggression unleashed upon us was a strict test of the viability of the socialist system, the strength of the multinational Soviet state, and the power of the patriotic spirit of the Soviet people.

What did the German Fascist political and military leadership count on when it planned its perfidious attack on the Soviet Union? It fostered the hope that the multinational Soviet state would disintegrate with the very first strikes by Hitler's army. But our enemies erred. The gains of socialism turned out to be equally dear to all the peoples of the USSR. The Great Patriotic War, the gravest of all wars known by mankind, showed that the social, political and spiritual unity of the workers of our country, and the soldiers of its armed forces is invincible. Everyone rose up to defend the homeland: old and young, men and women, all nations and nationalities. The generation born of October and brought up by the Soviet system also joined the fierce battle with the enemy.

Military formations were created in each republic, oblast and kray. Having received weapons and equipment and undergone brief military training, the majority of them were sent directly to the front. For example, Kazakhstan and Tajikistan sent hundreds of thousands of soldiers to the fronts during the first two and a half years of war. Uzbekistan trained several rifle and cavalry large units. Dozens of rifle brigades and cavalry divisions were organized in Turkmenia, Kirgizia, Azerbaijan, Armenia, Georgia, Latvia, Lithuania and Estonia. The national union republics sent a total of more than 80 divisions and separate brigades to the front.³

The chronicle of the Great Patriotic War preserves numerous examples of engagements and battles where the life-giving strength of patriotism and friendship of the peoples was most vividly manifested. "Defend every inch of Soviet soil; fight to the last drop of blood for our cities and villages!" "Stand to the death!" "Not one step back!" The appeals of the party Central Committee became law in the life of the Red Army soldiers. Boundless love for their homeland, loyalty to the party and people, and burning hatred toward the fascist invaders united fighters and commanders representing all nationalities.

It was November 1941. The Hitlerites were rushing toward the Caucasus. Artillerymen of the battery commanded by Lt S. Oganov were barring the enemy's path at the Berberob burial mound near Rostov-na-Donu. Four guns opposed 50 fascist tanks. For two days the handful of artillerymen waged the unequal battle. United by a single goal, not to let the enemy pass, the soldiers seemingly accomplished the impossible. The Hitlerites did not pass. In the battery were Russians, Ukrainians,

Armenians, Azerbaijanis, Kazakhs and Uzbeks. They strode into immortality, and glorified by their feat the great might of all our peoples.

"I recall today," writes Col Gen D. Dragunskiy, twice Hero of the Soviet Union, "my comrades in combat, sergeants Georgiy Gasilashvili and Avaz Berdiyev, and Sgt Maj Nikolay Novikov—a Georgian, an Azerbaijani, and a Russian. The main law for us was: Perish yourself, but help your comrades. So many times Sgt Georgiy Gasilashvili, my driver, saved me, risking his own life.

"Georgiy and I both grieved the death of Sgt Avaz Berdiyev, commander of a machinegun squad, who was a favorite throughout the 55th Gds Tank Bde. He was especially dear to me. In fall 1944 Reconnaissance Sgt Maj Nikolay Novikov, Sgt Berdiyev and I were simultaneously awarded the "Gold Star" medal of a Hero of the Soviet Union. Avaz invited me to visit him in Azerbaijan after the war. And I visited there. But, without him. Avaz perished a few days before victory and remained to lie eternally in Treptov Park.

Quite recently, examining the archival documents of the 55th Gds Tank Bde that I commanded during the war, I paid attention to this fact. Tankers from 30 nationalities and peoples of our country served in the unit. This unity helped us to endure and gain victory on the Kursk Salient, the Dnieper, and Vistula, in Poland and Germany, and in the storming of Berlin. We were united by hatred toward the enemy and love for our homeland. Without this love, and without the monolithic unity of all the peoples of the Soviet Union, victory would hardly have been possible."⁴

Each day of battles on the fronts of the Great Patriotic War gave rise to more and more heroes, of whom our whole country was proud. More than seven million persons were awarded orders and medals for courage, valor and military prowess, and more than 11,600 soldiers became heroes of the Soviet Union. Among them are representatives of more than 60 USSR nations and nationalities.

The Soviet people displayed the great force of patriotism and inviolable international unity of our society in the enemy rear. Within the ranks of the peoples avengers—partisans and underground fighters—fought the sons and daughters of various nationalities, representatives of many republics and oblasts, who, due to various circumstances, found themselves on Soviet soil temporarily occupied by the enemy.

Throughout the entire war the partisan movement was a massive and all-peoples' movement. It encompassed all the territory occupied by the enemy, and enjoyed all-round support from broad strata of the population. Moreover, in a number of western rayons and oblasts,

through the efforts of the citizens and actions of partisans and underground fighters, the Soviet Government was preserved, and in some cases partisan zones and territories existed where the occupiers never set foot.

By its scale and the political and military results, the heroic struggle of the Soviet people on the temporarily enemy occupied territory took on the significance of an important military-political factor in the defeat of fascism. It was of direct assistance to the Soviet Army in chasing the fascists from the homeland.

The wholehearted and selfless struggle of the partisans and underground fighters received nationwide recognition, and was highly assessed by the party and Soviet state. More than 127,000 men were awarded the medal, "Partisan of the Great Patriotic War," first and second degree. More than 184,000 partisans and underground fighters were awarded orders and medals, and the 249 who most distinguished themselves as participants in the all-people's struggle in the enemy rear were awarded the title Hero of the Soviet Union.⁵

The combat cooperation of all the peoples of the Soviet Union on the fronts of the great battle with fascism was buttressed by the selfless work of the rear. The Soviet people responded to the appeal of the Communist Party, "Everything For the Front, Everything For Victory!" with heroic labor, and supported and strengthened firm conviction in the army and navy personnel of the invincibility of the socialist homeland and of defeating the enemy.

Village toilers were models of courage and heroism in the harsh years of war. Despite the temporary loss of large areas of grain producing land, the kolkhoz peasants throughout the entire war supported the needs of the front and the country with a sufficient amount of food and raw materials.

During the years of severe testing, the Soviet intelligentsia made its invaluable contribution to defeating the enemy. Scientists, designers, engineers and technicians, under the harshest military conditions, were able to ensure our indisputable superiority over the science and technology of Fascist Germany and her allies. Brought up on Lenin's ideas, and under the leadership of the Communist Party, the working class, kolkhoz peasantry and Soviet intelligentsia—all of our multinational people—through their selfless labor along with the soldiers of the armed forces, forged victory over the enemy, accomplishing a feat for which mankind has not known the equal.

The friendship and fraternity of the peoples of the USSR were also manifested in the numerous patriotic initiatives aimed at seeking additional means of financial and material assistance to the front. This movement developed in all republics. During the war years more than 16 billion rubles went into the Defense Fund from the

population. Hundreds of tanks and combat aircraft, dozens of submarines and military boats, and much other combat equipment were built and sent to the front from the people's funds.⁶

Representatives of all nations and nationalities of the Soviet Union serve in our armed forces. This calls forth the need for continuous ideological and party-political work to indoctrinate military personnel in the spirit of friendship and brotherhood.

V. I. Lenin advised that "maximum equality" and good will be displayed toward other nationalities, and taught a respectful attitude toward national languages, and peoples' customs and traditions. Lenin's behests were widely embodied during the Great Patriotic War in the work of commanders, political workers, and party and komsomol organizations with soldiers of non-Russian nationality. The best officers, who had good general educational and political training, and who knew both Russian and national languages well, were named agitators, editors of military news sheets, and leaders of political class groups. The system of training personnel of non-Russian nationality to be command and political cadres was perfected.

Such forms and methods of agitation and propaganda work as meetings, reports, discussions, political information sessions, and readings of newspapers published in the languages of the peoples of the USSR justified themselves. In the units and subunits there took place meetings of the soldiers with their fellow countrymen who had arrived with replacements, ceremonial transfer of the weapons of fallen heroes to their combat comrades, and national soldier's artistic activity.

Ideological and political-education work facilitated the formation of ideological maturity in the soldiers, the strengthening of combat readiness and combat effectiveness of units and large units, discipline and self-discipline, and international unity and cohesion. The friendship of nations became one of the sources for the strength and might of the USSR Armed Forces, which was conducive to the historic victory over fascism.

The national question in the Soviet Union has been solved successfully, but it has been solved mainly taking into account in what form it came to us from the past (national oppression and inequality of nations and nationalities). Life does not stand still. National relations are not a congealed abstraction. Like any living social matter, they bring forth their own problems. Not to speak about them means to close one's eyes to real contradictions. For example, after what occurred in December 1986 in Alma-Ata, it became obvious in assessing the state of national relations in our country that we had long been in the prison of views that were rather far from real life and truth.

The events that took place in Nagornyy Karabakh, Azerbaijan and Armenia caused grief, offense and bewilderment in the Soviet people and in the soldiers of our army and navy. They could not help but concern every honest man, citizen and patriot. After all, we have one homeland, the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, and each of us must be concerned about it, and about multiplying its riches. In our life there are unsolved problems, it is stated in the appeal by CPSU Central Committee General Secretary M. S. Gorbachev to the workers of Azerbaijan and Armenia. But, inflaming discord and distrust of nations toward one another only interferes with solving them.

The Soviet Union includes more than a hundred nations and nationalities, among whom certain differences exist. They depend on numbers, sizes of territory, level of economic development and conditions of economic activity of nations and nationalities, particularities of their cultures, and uniqueness of traditions and customs. In some republics, unfortunately, contradictions are still encountered between representatives of the indigenous nation and separate national groups living in one or another area of the republic.

In our country there are no grounds for national conflicts and enmity. But, it must not be forgotten that there are instances of national limitation, egoism and national hostility in some people. National prejudices are still tenaciously held in the psychology of people who are insufficiently mature ideologically. In the recent past negative phenomena were underestimated in a number of republics. Serious mistakes were made in the implementation of national policy, and the struggle against manifestations of chauvinism, nationalism and localism in the economic, cultural and spiritual spheres was weakly waged. These shortcomings were emphasized with particular sharpness in the CPSU Central Committee resolution, "On the Work of the Kazakh Republic Party Organization on the International and Patriotic Education of the Workers."

Costs of and omissions in the international education of the workers, especially young people, engender most directly many problems associated with the preparation of youth for service in the Soviet Armed Forces. An especially large number of omissions can be noted in the Transcaucasion and Central Asian republics, Estonia, and Kazakhstan. There are numerous draftees whose knowledge of Russian is poor, and there are even those, no matter how incredible it may be, who cannot read or write at all. In 1983 there were two such people, in 1986 103, and as a minimum in 1987 there were 230.⁷

Such an acute problem as poor communication among nations also interferes with the cohesion of multinational military collectives, and the creation of a healthy microclimate in them. As was already emphasized, this is partly due to poor knowledge of Russian language by soldiers called up from the Central Asian republics and

the Caucasus. On the other hand, frequently so-called "associations of fellow-nationals" arise in subunits, from which non-regulation attitudes grow, and other violations are committed.

Officers have the task of using their arsenal of pedagogical resources to full effectiveness in the work of unifying multinational military collectives. Such work begins in the military schools. Here the course on military pedagogy and psychology must take on a more applied nature. It is especially important that commanders and political workers have a thorough knowledge of the social, cultural-historical, and psychological particularities of the various nationalities and peoples of our country, their traditions, etc.

The friendship of the USSR peoples has been and remains an inexhaustible source of the strength and might of the Soviet state. A continuous process of drawing together classes and social groups, and further strengthening the unity of nations is going on in our society. This is having a most beneficial effect on the steady increase in the combat capability of the Soviet Armed Forces.

Military service in the ranks of the armed forces is an honored duty of Soviet citizens, written into the USSR Constitution. The Law on Universal Military Obligation, which specifies its provisions, states: "All male USSR citizens, regardless of origin, social and property status, racial and national affiliation, education, language, attitude toward religion, type and nature of occupation, and place of residence, are obligated to carry out active military service in the ranks of the USSR Armed Forces."⁸ Uniform regulatory requirements are made upon them.

In military service the friendship of peoples is especially necessary. Joint military labor, for example the study of crew served weapons and military equipment, quickly bring together soldiers of different nationalities, developing feelings of comradeship and collectivism. The Soviet Armed Forces serve for youth as an excellent school of life, education and internationalism.

Traditions of friendship and brotherhood are dear to the Soviet soldier. Our soldiers are always ready to come to the aid of peoples fighting for their freedom and independence, and to fulfill the tasks placed on them as becomes true internationalists.

These qualities convincingly characterize the personnel of the limited contingent of Soviet forces in the Republic of Afghanistan. Yesterday's school children, workers, kolkhoz peasants, and students, led by their commanders and political officers, not only preserve spirit, but also manifest high vigilance, and are brave soldiers and wise political figures. A warm attitude toward the Afghan people and respect for their customs and traditions are manifested in the character of the Soviet soldier-internationalist. Undoubtedly, the indoctrinating role of our

army is not realized in and of itself. The confirmation of high self-discipline, discipline, and internationalism in the military collectives requires purposeful work by commanders, political organs, and party and komsomol organizations. Recently it has been carried out more specifically and actively. The *perestroyka* that has touched all spheres of our social life placed before Soviet soldiers new and more complex tasks of improving combat readiness and strengthening law and order in the forces. It brought forth a number of new approaches to working with people, including to international education of the personnel.

Political and educational work are characterized by close ties with the life of the country and with the tasks of acceleration of its socio-economic development, and thorough grounding in the need for this close alliance of all nations and nationalities. The experience of subunits where the personnel are familiarized, not case by case, but systematically, with the traditions of the peoples who populate our country, and where instances of disdain toward their national particularities are fought, warrant attention. Topical evenings devoted to the fraternal republics, and discussions by soldiers who have visited on vacations have become widespread.

Having familiarized himself with the life and military training of the men of the Guards Training Motorized Rifle Leningrad Regiment imeni Leninskiy Komsomol, Army Gen D. P. Yazov, USSR Minister of Defense, CPSU Central Committee Politburo candidate member, speaking to the soldiers noted: "You live in a harmonious multinational regimental family, united by the single goal of reliably defending the great cause of October. This is an inexhaustible source of strength and inspiration. And if the regiments are strong, this means that the divisions are also strong. This means that our armed forces, the bulwark of peace and of the creative labor of the Soviet people, are also strong."⁹

In the days when the hour of sober decisions has come, each of us must understand with a profound sense of responsibility that only in a harmonious family of equal nations, united on truly democratic foundations, within the framework of a single socialist state, can the progress of our homeland be ensured.

Footnotes

1. M. S. Gorbachev, "Oktyabr i perestroyka: revolyutsiya prodolzhayetsya" [October and Perestroyka: The Revolution Continues], Moscow, Politizdat, 1987, pp 36-37.

2. "Sovetskaya Voyennaya Entsiklopediya" [Soviet Military Encyclopedia], Moscow, Voenizdat, Vol 2, p 349.

3. "Partiya i armiya" [Party and Army], Moscow, Politizdat, 1977, p 179.

4. ZNAMENOSETS, No 12, 1987, pp 2-3.

5. "Geroi Sovetskogo Soyuza" [Heroes of the Soviet Union], Moscow, Voenizdat, 1984, p 177.

6. PRAVDA, 21 November 1974.

7. Ibid., 24 January 1988.

8. "Zakon SSSR vseobshchey voinskoy obyazannosti" [Law of the USSR on Universal Military Obligation], Moscow, Voenizdat, 1986, p 4.

9. KRASNAYA ZVEZDA, 30 October 1987.

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Development of Soviet Military Art in the Battle of Kursk

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[Article by Army General S. I. Postnikov: "The Development of Soviet Military Art in the Battle of Kursk: 45th Anniversary of the Clash on the Fiery Salient"]

[Text] On the Moscow-Simferopol Highway, at the 624th kilometer, a memorial complex is erected in honor of the outstanding victory of the Soviet Army, which crushed the German Fascist forces during the Battle of Kursk in 1943. This clash was the most significant event of its time, and was a most important stage in completing the fundamental turning point in the Great Patriotic War, and World War II as a whole.

Let us recall that by summer 1943 the USSR Armed Forces, in accordance with their military-political goals, had successfully accomplished a number of important strategic missions, and had moved west up to 600-700 km. From November 1942 through the end of March 1943 the enemy lost approximately 1.7 million soldiers and officers, 24,000 guns, more than 3,500 tanks, and 4,300 aircraft.¹

Attempting to escape the crisis that had been created, Fascist Germany declared total mobilization of the country's adult population. The economic resources of the occupied countries of Europe were thrown into the production of weapons and military equipment. All of this made it possible, to a certain extent, to replenish the losses of the Wehrmacht, and provided new military equipment. Exploiting the lack of a second front in Europe, Hitler's command calculated on creating a powerful fist on the Soviet-German Front, in order to wage a major offensive in summer 1943, seize the strategic initiative anew, and change the course of the war to its favor.

The fascist strategists ascribed particular importance to the strike at Kursk. The selection of this axis was not accidental. As a matter of fact, during the 1943 Winter Campaign, the so-called Kursk Salient was formed, an

area extending 550 km across the front and wedged deeply into the enemy defense, occupied by Soviet forces. It was of important operational [operativnogo] significance, since it was located at the juncture of two large enemy groupings, the right flank of Army Group Center hung over the Central Front, and the left flank of Army Group South encompassed the Voronezh Front from the south. The enemy thought that the configuration of the salient, nature of the terrain, and disposition of the forces created favorable opportunities for making strikes at its base, with the goal of encircling and destroying a strong Soviet grouping consisting of two fronts, as well as the strategic reserves located behind them. Thus, the German Fascist command intended to take revenge for the defeat at Stalingrad.

The operation [operatsiya] received the code name Cittadel. Chief reliance was placed on the effectiveness of the sudden, mass use of tank units and formations on narrow breakthrough sectors, the employment of the new Tiger and Panther tanks, and Ferdinand assault guns, as well as aircraft with higher fighting and flying qualities, the Focke-Wulf-190A fighters, and Heinkel-129 ground attack aircraft. To make the strike a large grouping of 50 of the best divisions was created, including 16 tank and motorized divisions. Overall, the enemy concentrated here more than 900,000 men, approximately 10,000 guns and mortars, up to 2,700 tanks and assault guns, and approximately 2,050 aircraft.² This constituted approximately 70 percent of the total number of tank divisions, and more than 65 percent of the combat aircraft operating on the Soviet-German Front.

The purposeful activity of all types of reconnaissance helped the VGK [Supreme High Command] headquarters disclose the enemy plan, and establish the composition of strike groupings and axes of the strikes that were being prepared. The question of the nature of military operations [deystviye] by Soviet forces arose. MSU G. K. Zhukov, deputy supreme commander-in-chief, who was in the area of the Kursk Salient, emphasized back in April 1943 in a report to the VGK headquarters: "I consider it inadvisable for our forces to shift to the offensive in the immediate future for the purpose of forestalling the enemy. It will be better if we exhaust the enemy on our defense, knock out his tanks, and then, bringing in fresh reserves, by shifting to a general offensive finish off the enemy grouping for once and for all."³

Having thoroughly evaluated the situation that was taking shape, our command concluded that it was more advantageous to operate in this way. In contrast to 1941 and 1942, the shift to a strategic defense by the Soviet forces at Kursk was not forced, but deliberate. This plan indicates the creative approach taken by the Soviet Supreme Command toward solving strategic missions. The USSR Armed Forces, not losing the initiative seized in the winter battles, selected the best method of military operations [deystviy] for itself at the time.

The battle on the Kursk Salient included two stages: the defensive operation (5-23 July 1943), and the counteroffensive (12 July-23 August 1943).

The defensive operation [operatsiya] had the goal of breaking the enemy offensive: from the Orel side by forces of the Central Front (Army Gen K. K Rokossovskiy, commander), and from the Belgorod area by the those of the Voronezh Front (Army Gen N. F. Vatutin, commander). To the rear of the latter were deployed forces of the Steppe Military District (from 9 July the Steppe Front, Col Gen I. S. Konev, commander). The idea of deep echelonment of combat formations and defensive positions was made the foundation of the organization of the defense. Eight zones and lines, with an overall depth of up to 300 km, were prepared in a relatively short period of time in the area of the Kursk Salient.

A distinguishing feature of the operational [operativnogo] defense was the fact that, compared with the first period of the war, the structure of the forces had become deeper. An army defensive front had narrowed to 35-60 km, and operational [operativnogo] densities of forces and weapons had increased. First echelon armies, as a rule, prepared three zones (main, second and army). The creation of two defensive zones to a depth of 15-20 km, and the shift to a system of continuous trenches, were new aspects in the structure of the tactical zone. A rifle corps defended the tactical zone, having two divisions on the first and one on the second defensive zone. A rifle division defended in one or two echelons.

Anti-tank defense was further developed. It was created to the full depth of the army structure (30-35 km) and consisted of anti-tank strongpoints and areas combined into a system. An important place was allotted to artillery anti-tank reserves. They were concentrated on the main tank-vulnerable axes, and were used jointly with mobile obstacle detachments. The operational [operativnaya] density of anti-tank artillery alone reached 16-20 guns per kilometer of front, which made it possible to repulse an offensive by 30-60 enemy tanks.

The massive use of anti-tank forces increased the stability and activeness of the defense. One portion of the tank regiments and brigades was attached to the rifle large units; the other remained in army reserve. Tank corps were placed in front reserves, and tank armies comprised front second echelons. They received the missions of making powerful counterstrikes, or occupying and holding prepared defensive lines along with the combined arms large units.

Simultaneously with the creation of a stable defense, the forces engaged in intensive military training. Particular importance was placed on mastering the methods of organizing and implementing coordination, and working out techniques for combating the new enemy tanks and self-propelled artillery pieces. Commanders were directed to take active action in the battle for the main

and second defensive zones, to make extensive use of maneuver of forces and weapons during the course of the battle, and to employ counterattacks to restore a lost position.

The Soviet command successfully solved the problem of all-round support of combat operations [deystviye]. The capable organization of reconnaissance made it possible to obtain information in a timely manner about the enemy plans, and the disposition and composition of his strike groupings and reserves. Extensive party political work helped improve the quality of preparation of the forces for decisive battles. Its efforts were directed at mobilizing the soldiers to accomplish reliable engineer preparation of the defensive areas, and to inculcate in the men valor, and firm resolve to repulse the strike and destroy the enemy. Considerable attention was paid to teaching replacements, who constituted 50-60 percent of the men in the majority of large units. It can be said that by the beginning of July our forces were thoroughly prepared for the forthcoming engagement, both in a military and a moral-psychological respect.

At dawn on 5 July the German Fascist forces shifted to the offensive on the northern and southern faces of the Kursk Salient, and immediately encountered the staunch defense of the armies of the Central and Voronezh fronts.

Since the times that the enemy would shift to the offensive had been determined, an artillery counterpreparation was conducted, which detained its start two or three hours and somewhat weakened the enemy strike. Thus, the Hitlerite offensive operation [deystviye] plan was disrupted, and surprise was lost.

The enemy made his main strike on the Orel-Kursk Axis at Olkhovatka, in the 13th Army defensive zone (Diagram 1). Here up to 500 of his tanks and self-propelled artillery pieces operated. According to enemy calculations this armada was to break our defense. But, the Soviet soldiers did not waver, displaying staunchness and mass heroism. Only after the fifth attack were the fascists able to break into the forward edge of the defense of the 13th Army (Lt Gen N. P. Pukhov, commander), and advance 6-8 km at a cost of tremendous losses, moving to the second defensive zone. All further attempts to break through our defense failed.

On the evening of 5 July the Central Front commander decided to make a counterstrike the next morning against the enemy grouping that had penetrated, and restore the position with forces of the 17th Gds Rfl Corps of the 13th Army, 16th Tank Corps of the 2d Tank Army, and 19th Separate Tank Corps from front reserve. And, although due to extremely limited time available and organizational complexities, the planned counterstrike was not fully implemented, front forces pressed the enemy back 1.5-2 km and pinned down his actions. Time was gained for concentration of additional forces on the threatened axis.

On 7 July Hitler's command shifted the main strike to Ponyri, also continuing to attack on the Olkhovatka Axis. It threw into the battle almost all the forces of its strike grouping, but was unsuccessful. The stubborn defense of the Central Front, precise and capable control of the units and large units, powerful airstrikes, employment of a system of engineer and mine obstacles, counterattacks and counterstrikes against the penetrating enemy forces, high military skill and mass heroism of our soldiers broke the enemy offensive against Kursk from the north. The fascists advanced only 10-12 km toward Kursk. In four days of fierce battles the enemy lost more than 40,000 soldiers and officers, several hundred tanks and assault guns, and up to 500 aircraft.⁴

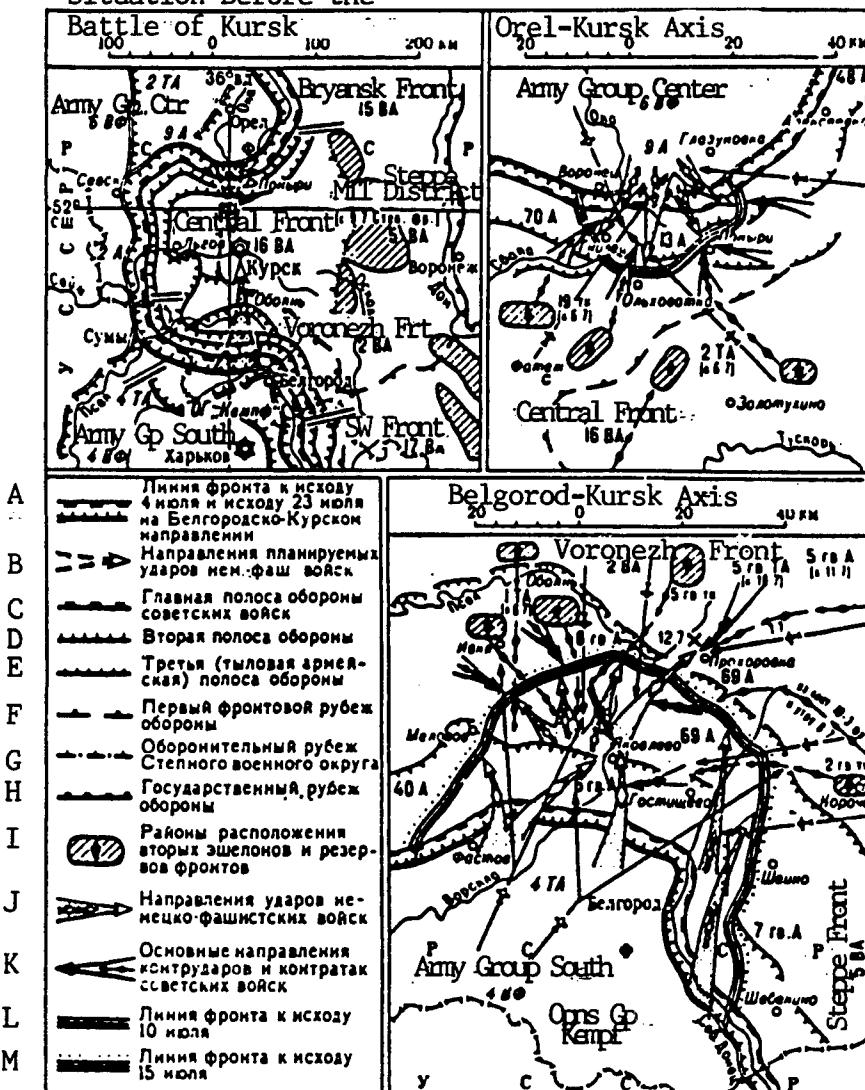
The battle on the south face of the Kursk Salient was intense. The 6th Gds Army (Lt Gen I. M. Chistyakov, commander), Voronezh Front, took the main strike on the Oboyan Axis. In the 7th Gds Army zone (Lt Gen M. S. Shumilov, commander) the enemy made a secondary strike on Korocha. Already on the first day he committed five infantry, eight tank and one motorized divisions in the zone of these armies. Select SS large units took part in the offensive, including the Reich, Adolph Hitler, and Deadhead tank divisions. The Hitlerites threw more than 700 tanks and self-propelled artillery pieces supported by large air forces against our troops. Although the enemy advanced only 8-10 km, the situation remained complex. The German Fascist command continued to build up its strikes. It was necessary to commit new forces in order to halt the enemy. The 1st Tank Army (Lt Gen Tank Troops M. Ye. Katukov, commander) carried out a night march, and on the morning of 6 July shifted to the defense on line Melovoye - Yakovleva. The defense of the 40th Army left flank, as well as that of the 6th Gds Army, was reinforced.

On the second day the battle continued with still greater ferocity. The fascists decided to break through to Oboyan at any price, in the gap between the 1st Tank Army and the 5th Guards Tank Corps. Recalling those days, M. Ye. Katukov wrote: "Having evaluated the situation, I immediately ordered that the enemy penetration be destroyed, and for this purpose sent the 1st Tank Brigade, 31st Tank Corps, into the threatened area. All evening we tensely awaited news from the area of Yablochkin and Bolshiye Mayachki. I hoped that this brigade, in coordination with the 5th Gds Tank Corps, would be able to throw back the enemy. But, as the reports of the brigade commander made clear, due to inadequate forces and resources, it and its neighbors did not succeed in restoring the situation. The brigade and corps were forced to shift to the defense."⁵

The plans of the German Fascist command to move to the area of Oboyan by a powerful strike made by tank groupings were broken due to the timely movement of the 1st Tank Army, and 2d and 5th guards tank corps to the axis of their offensive. In two days of battles the

The Battle of Kursk. Soviet Defensive Engagement (5-23 July 1943)

Situation Before the



LEGEND: A -- front line by day's end 4 July and 23 July on Belgorod-Kursk Axis; B -- axes of planned strikes by German Fascist forces; C -- main defensive belt of Soviet forces; D -- 2d defensive belt; E -- 3d (army rear) defensive belt; F -- 1st front defensive line; G -- Steppe Military District defensive line; H -- State defensive line; I -- areas of disposition of front 2d echelons and reserves; J -- axes of strikes by German Fascist forces; K -- main axes of counter-strikes and counterattacks by Soviet forces; L -- front line by day's end 10 July; M -- front line by day's end 15 July

[NOTE: A = army; TA = tank army; BA = air army; tk = tank corps]

enemy advanced a distance of 10-18 km, but did not gain freedom of maneuver to the flanks in any of the sectors, and was forced to "gnaw through" our deeply echeloned defense.

Fierce battles also raged on the Korocha Axis, where the enemy forces seized a bridgehead on the east bank of the Severskiy Donets, and on a narrow sector of the front moved to the second defensive zone on the right flank of the 7th Gds Army, but were forced to stop.

On 9 July the enemy made a new attempt to break through to Oboyan from the south. On a 10 km sector of the front he threw into the attack up to five tank divisions, numbering approximately 500 tanks. Bloody defensive battles raged, during which the enemy was bled white, and on 10 July was forced to give up the further offensive on Oboyan.

Then the enemy command decided to break through to Kursk through Prokhorovka by a mighty ram from its tank grouping (up to 800 tanks). Anticipating this, back on 9 July the VGK Stavka ordered the Steppe Front commander to move the 4th Gds, 27th and 53d armies to the Kursk-Belgorod axis, and transferred the 5th Gds and 5th Gds Tank armies to the Voronezh Front commander. The forces of this front, reinforced with strategic reserves, were to break the prepared offensive on the Prokhorovka Axis by a powerful counterstrike.

On 12 July our forces made a counterstrike in the Prokhorovka area. Almost simultaneously enemy tank divisions also shifted to the offensive. A tank meeting engagement developed. It was characterized by extreme ferocity and by diversity of forms of combat actions.

In his memoirs MSU A. M. Vasilevskiy evaluated the significance of events at Prokhorovka thus: "In my view, the chief result of the defensive battle should be considered the defeat of enemy tank large units, as a result of which a correlation of forces in this important branch of arms arose that was especially favorable to us. To a significant degree our winning a major tank meeting engagement south of Prokhorovka, 30 km from Belgorod, contributed to this. I witnessed this truly titanic duel of two steel armadas (up to 1,200 tanks and SAU [self-propelled artillery]), which took place on the south face of the Kursk Salient on 12 July."⁶

Soviet forces won the Prokhorovka tank engagement. The Wehrmacht suffered heavy losses (up to 400 tanks alone). The enemy plans, which anticipated an attack on Kursk from the south, were wrecked on 12 July. After this the enemy could no longer wage active offensive operations [deystviye].

During the Kursk Defensive Operation [operatsiya] the enemy was exhausted and bled white, and the conditions were created for a shift to a decisive counteroffensive, which differed from those at Moscow and Stalingrad in that long before it started it could be planned and well

prepared. Thus, at the moment of the offensive on the Orel Axis, the forces on the left flank of the Western, Bryansk and Central fronts had an overall superiority over the enemy of 2:1 in personnel, 3:1 in artillery and mortars, more than 2:1 in tanks, and almost 3:1 in aircraft. A total of 22 combined arms, 5 tank and 6 air armies, as well as large long range aviation forces took part in it.

Determination of the time for transition to the counteroffensive was a complex problem for our command. It was to begin at the moment that the offensive capabilities of the enemy were already spent, but he had not yet shifted to the defense and had not created a defensive grouping. The Supreme High Command handled this task successfully.

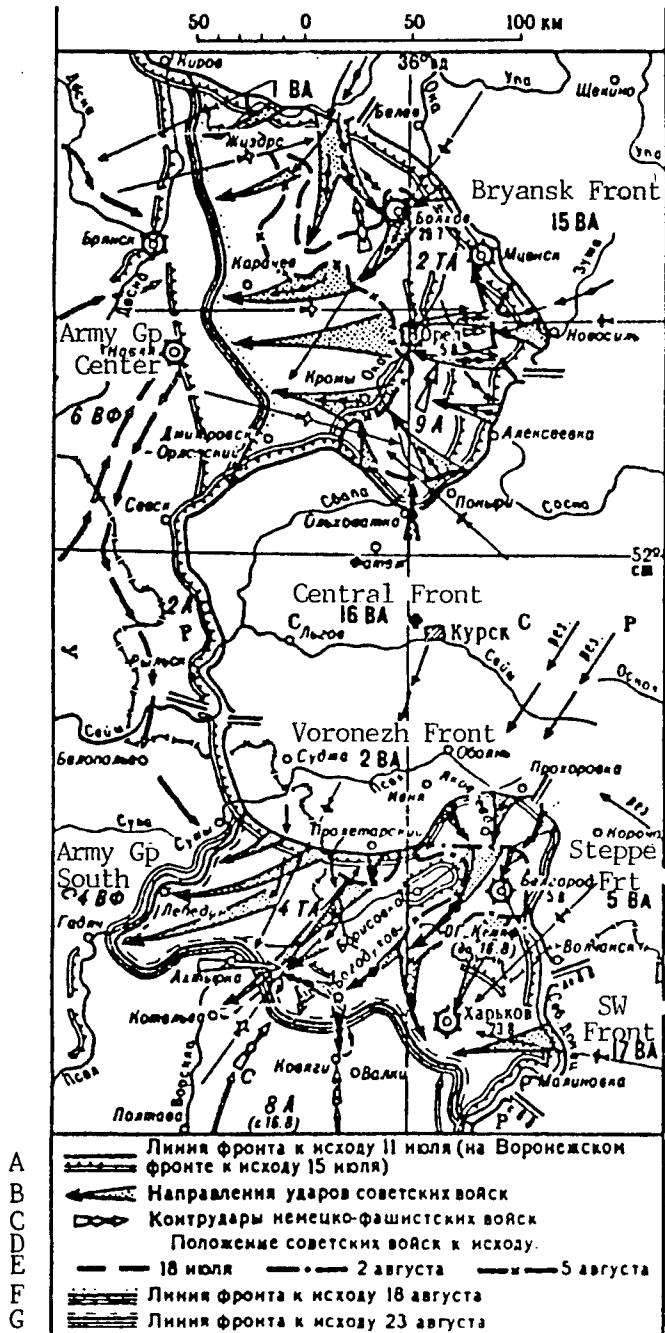
On 12 July the new stage in the Battle of Kursk began—the Soviet counteroffensive (Diagram 2). On that day forces of the Western Front left flank (11th Gds Army, and from 13 June also the 50th Army) and the Bryansk Front, which had not participated in repulsing the enemy offensive, made a surprise strike on the Orel Axis. On 15 July the armies of the Central Front right flank and center embarked upon decisive actions.

The basis of the plan for Operation [operatsiya] Kutuzov was the idea of strikes on converging axes to split the enemy Orel grouping and destroy it. Forces of the Western (Col Gen V. D. Sokolovskiy, commander), Bryansk (Col Gen M. M. Popov, commander), and right flank of the Central Front made strikes from three axes. The spatial scope of the Orel Operation [operatsiya] was 350 km across the front and 120-130 km in depth.

The German Fascist command, placing considerable importance on the Orel bridgehead, built a strong defense there with a developed system of field fortifications, and covered them strongly with engineer obstacles. Considering this, the Soviet command paid special attention to the deep structure of combat formations of large units, and the creation of high operational [operativnogo] densities. For example, in the 11th Gds Army the artillery density on the main strike axis reached up to 200 guns and mortars per kilometer of front.

The Soviet offensive was accompanied by serious difficulties. Recalling those days, MSU K. K. Rokossovskiy wrote: "Shifting to the offensive with its right flank armies, the same 48th, 13th and 70th armies that had been substantially weakened in the heavy defensive battles, the forces of the Central Front began to advance slowly, overcoming the stubborn resistance of the Hitlerites, who made able use of their well prepared lines. In the literal sense of the word, we had to gnaw through one position after another. The enemy employed a mobile defense. While some of his units defended, others occupied a new line 5-8 km away. The enemy threw tank forces into counterattacks everywhere, and he still had a sufficient number of them left."⁷

The Battle of Kursk. Soviet Counteroffensive (12 Jul - 23 Aug 43)



LEGEND: A -- front line by day's end 11 July (on Voronezh Front by day's end 15 July); B -- Soviet strike axes; C -- counterstrikes by German Fascist forces; D -- position of Soviet forces by day's end:; E -- 18 July, 2 August, 5 August; F -- front line by day's end 18 August; G -- front line by day's end 23 August

For better control of the forces operating in the Orel area, on 30 July the VGK [Supreme High Command] Stavka transferred the 4th Tank, 11th Gds and 11th armies, as well as the 2d Gds Cavalry Corps, from the Western Front to the Bryansk Front. This decision not only was of considerable importance for defeating the enemy Orel Grouping, but also enabled the Western Front command to concentrate all its attention on preparing the offensive on the Smolensk Axis.

Attacking on converging axes to Orel, our forces destroyed 15 enemy divisions, liberated the city on 5 August, and, pursuing the withdrawing enemy, by 17-18 August reached the defensive line on the approaches to Bryansk, having advanced west a distance of up to 150 km. With the elimination of the Orel bridgehead the possibility arose for development of the offensive on the Bryansk Axis, and moving into the eastern areas of Belorussia.

The counteroffensive by the Voronezh and Steppe fronts on the Belgorod-Kharkov Axis (Operation [operatsiya] Polkovodets Rumyantsev) began on 3 August. Having broken through the enemy tactical defense on the first day, on 5 August Soviet forces liberated Belgorod, and on 23 August Kharkov. During this operation [operatsiya] 15 enemy divisions were destroyed. Front forces advanced 140 km west, having expanded the breakthrough to 300 km and thereby created favorable conditions for the liberation of the Left Bank Ukraine. The liberation of Kharkov victoriously concluded the battle at Kursk, after which followed a general strategic offensive by the Soviet Army.

In the engagement on the Kursk Salient, our command demonstrated a creative and innovative approach to solving the most important tasks of strategy, operational [operativnogo] art and tactics, and showed its superiority over the military school of the Hitlerites.

The organization of strategic coordination between groups of fronts, and the use of large reserves to change the situation to our advantage, were further developed. Experience was acquired in massing forces and resources on decisive axes. The new organization tank armies were employed for the first time as an echelon for development of success.

MSU G. K. Zhukov emphasized: "In the Battle of Kursk in the process of the counteroffensive tank and mechanized large units and formations were used widely for the first time; in a number of cases they were the decisive factor of operational [operativnogo] maneuver, the means of swiftly developing success into the depth and reaching the rear roads of the enemy groupings."⁸

The creation and able employment of strategic reserves was of considerable importance in solving defensive and offensive tasks. They were not dispersed, as was the case in the first period of the war, but were sent to the main axis at the decisive moment, which made it possible to achieve strategic success.

Such an important strategic task as choosing the main strike axis was also successfully solved. It was made against the strongest enemy grouping. As a result, defeating it disrupted the stability of the enemy strategic front and worsened his military-political position, and advantageous conditions appeared for waging the entire campaign.

Strategic leadership of our forces was characterized by great centralization of control, and a high degree of art in selecting the time of actions and most advisable methods of fighting. The Soviet command consistently built up the strength of strikes, and ably organized coordination among fronts operating on one or several axes. For example, when on the southern face of the Kursk Salient a powerful Hitlerite grouping was forced to withdraw under strikes by forces of the Voronezh and Steppe fronts, forces of the Southwestern Front began combat operations [deystviya] on 17 July on the Izyum-Barvenkovo Axis, and forces of the Southern Front on the Mius River. On 22 July forces of the Leningrad and Volkov fronts shifted to the offensive in the Mga area.

The level of operational-tactical [operativno-takticheskiy] skill of command personnel increased. In preparing and waging offensive operations [operatsiya], for example, the problem of breaking through a deeply echeloned enemy defense and developing the offensive to great depth was successfully solved. Fronts attacked in a 150-200 km zone; armies in a 25-35 km zone. The depth of an army offensive operation [operatsiya] reached 110 km; that of a front operation 150-200 km. Breakthrough sectors were 25-30 km wide for a front, and 6-12 km wide for combined arms armies. Division offensive zones narrowed to 2-4 km, and often began to coincide with the breakthrough sectors.

The operational [operativnoye] structure of the forces was improved. A two echelon structure of fronts was employed beginning in summer 1943. Their mobile groups—pure tank armies—operated on the main strike axis. At the beginning of the 1943 Summer-Fall Campaign, combined arms armies were structured in two echelons, with a mobile group consisting of a tank or mechanized corps. Large units and units shifted from a one echelon structure of combat formations to a multi-echelon structure, but the battalions and companies attacked in one echelon. Artillery groups, artillery-antitank reserves, and mobile obstacle detachments were created in the rifle divisions and regiments. All of this provided for massing of forces and resources and increased tactical densities.

The actions of the forces were swift and maneuver-oriented, and close and wide envelopments of centers of enemy resistance were frequently used. Forward detachments were used extensively in the pursuit, which did not allow the enemy to withdraw systematically to intermediate lines.

Soviet military art in the employment of aviation rose to a new level. In the battle on the Kursk Salient the massing of forces of frontal aviation and long range aviation on main axes was carried out more decisively, and their coordination with the ground forces improved. A new form of using aviation was employed at full scale in the counteroffensive—the air offensive. In the Battle of Kursk our aviation gained strategic air superiority for once and for all, and thereby contributed to creating favorable conditions for subsequent offensive operations [operatsiya].

Mighty enemy groupings on the Orel and Belgorod-Kharkov axes were destroyed as a result of the defense and counteroffensive at Kursk. In this battle the Wehrmacht lost approximately 500,000 men, 1,500 tanks, more than 3,700 aircraft, and 3,000 guns. Its offensive strategy suffered complete defeat.

Soviet forces displayed courage, staunchness and mass heroism at Kursk. More than 100,000 soldiers, sergeants, officers and generals were awarded orders and medals, and more than 180 men earned the title Hero of the Soviet Union. Combat orders began to sparkle on the banners of many large units and units; 132 large units and units received the guards title, and 26 were awarded honorary names "Orel," "Belgorod," "Kharkov," and "Karachev."

The victory in the battle of Kursk was one of the most important stages in the defeat of Fascist Germany by the Soviet Union. The Reich and its allies were forced to shift to the defense in all theaters of World War II. The strategic initiative shifted for once and for all into the hands of the Soviet command.

Since those days 45 years have passed. Tremendous changes in the forms and methods of waging armed combat have taken place in this time. However, the experience of the past war even today remains an invaluable source of military knowledge. The study and generalization of the experience of the largest battle in history, the main content of which were the defense and counteroffensive, are of permanent importance for the further development of military art, based on socialist, purely defensive military doctrine.

It should be acknowledged that at times some commanders underestimate the art of conducting an active defense. Sometimes in exercises the defense is organized unskillfully and waged passively. Counterattacks and counterstrikes, bold actions by raiding groups in enemy rear areas, and flexible maneuver by forces and resources in the course of the defensive battle and engagement are insufficiently practiced.

In the current training year much attention is being paid to waging defensive actions and studying past combat experience. Generals and officers must understand well that only on the basis of an all-round analysis of the

interconnection of the past and present can dialectical continuity in military affairs be established, and on this basis creatively proved and raised to a new qualitative level.

Footnotes

1. "Istoriya vtoroy mirovoy voyny 1939-1945" [History of World War II 1939-1945], Vol 7, Moscow, Voenizdat, 1976, p 15.
2. Ibid., pp 143-144.
3. G. K. Zhukov, "Vospominaniya i razmyshleniya" [Reminiscences and Reflections], Vol 3, Moscow, Novosti Press Agency, 1986, p 15.
4. "Istoriya Velikoy...," Vol 3, Moscow, Voenizdat, 1954, p 262.
5. M. Ye. Katukov, "Ha ostriye glavnogo udara" [At the Spear Point of the Main Strike], Moscow, Vysshaya shkola, 1985, pp 226-227.
6. A. M. Vasilevskiy, "Deleniye vsey zhizni" [A Life's Work], Moscow, Politizdat, 1983, pp 308-309.
7. K. K. Rokossovskiy, "Soldatskiy dolg" [A Soldier's Duty], Moscow, Voenizdat, 1985, pp 218-219.
8. Zhukov, op cit, Vol 3, p 73.

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Combat Operations [deystviya] by Black Sea Fleet Submarines in 1943-1944

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[Article by Captain 1st Rank, retired, V.P. Vorobyev: "Combat Operations [deystviya] by Black Sea Fleet Submarines in 1943-1944*"]

[Text] The threat hanging over the groupings of German Fascist forces in the North Caucasus and the Crimea forced the German command to reinforce them hastily. In this situation lines of communication on the Black Sea took on particular importance for the enemy. In 1943 from 29 to 200 convoys per month took place on lines linking enemy occupied ports, not counting shipments along the Kerch Strait.¹ That is why disrupting enemy lines of communication became the main task for the Black Sea Fleet. It was assigned by the people's commissar of the navy, who stated in a telegram to the front military soviet of 1 January 1943: "According to available information the Germans are very interested in sea shipments from Romania to the Crimea and the Kerch Peninsula, and disrupting these lines of communication

at this time will be a great contribution to our land front."² He confirmed this instruction by a directive of 30 January and a telegram order of 4 February.³

Using the combat experience acquired in 1941-1942, Black Sea Fleet personnel, including submariners, continued to build up efforts in the battle for the lines of communication. In January-February 1943 submarines alone sunk 11 transports, 5 assault barges and 2 schooners, and damaged 2 tankers, 1 transport, and 1 assault barge.⁴

Organizationally the submarines were combined into a brigade (BPL) consisting of five divisions. On 1 January 1943 it numbered 29 submarines (18 operational, 11 in repair). The creation of a task force under a common command significantly improved control of submarines, preparation of the ships for operational [boyevyy] departures for sea, as well as their material and technical support.⁵

The disruption of enemy sea shipments was accomplished in a difficult situation. As it stepped up the intensiveness of convoy movements day after day, at the same time the fascist command took energetic steps to provide them security. Thus, the enemy had 4 destroyers, 3 torpedo boats, 3 gunboats, 12 mine-sweeping boats, 4 patrol craft and 3 submarine chasers, not counting several other ships converted from commercial vessels, to protect convoys on the Sevastopol-Konstantsa and Konstantsa-Bosporus lines. On lines of communication along the south coast of the Crimea he used fast and maneuverable assault barges, specially equipped for accomplishing missions of anti-submarine and anti-air defense. In transit from Konstantsa to Constantinople, the tanker Ossag alone had in security two destroyers, two gun boats, a submarine chaser and four mine-sweeping boats.⁶

The convoys moved primarily at night, which complicated movement by the submarines into torpedo attacks. Moreover, mines constituted a serious danger. The enemy, attempting to create a threat to our ships and pin down their actions, continued to mine the approaches to Sevastopol, Yevpatoriya, Feodosiya and the Kerch Strait. In 1943 alone he laid 50 new mine obstacles (approximately 6,000 mines), of which 20 were at the southern exit from the Kerch Strait.⁷ Searching for and attacking convoys were also hampered because the submarines, which were based on ports along the Caucasus coast, had to make lengthy transits (up to 600 miles) to the area of combat operations [boyevyye deystviya].

Despite the difficulties, the Black Sea Fleet submariners persistently overcame the enemy anti-submarine defense and dealt him considerable damage. The greatest successes were achieved by the crew of D-4, commanded by Capt Lt I.Ya. Trofimov, which sank three transports. The combat record of other submarines were: M-111 (Capt 3d Rank Ya. K. Iosseliani, commander)—two

transports and a lighter; M-112 (Capt Lt S. N. Khakhanov, commander)—a transport ship and fast assault barge; L-4 (Capt 3d Rank Ye. P. Polyakov, commander) a fast assault barge and two schooners; Shch-215 (Capt 3d Rank M. V. Greshilov, commander)—a transport and a fast barge.⁸

In 1943 the submarines accomplished six mine laying trips. The 120 mines they laid in areas of active shipping kept the enemy in a state of constant tension, forced him to carry out intensified minesweeping, held back the departure and arrival of convoys, and led to losses.⁹ The overall damage that submarines caused to the enemy transport fleet in 1943 on Black Sea lines of communication was 33,428 registered gross tons.¹⁰

At the end of October, 13 positions on the south and southwest coasts of the Black Sea were allotted for submarines, which were used actively until the beginning of 1944.¹¹ The number of submarines in the fleet (29) also remained as before. But, there were only 11 combat effective submarines, the rest required repair. Those that remained in action [v stroyu] carried out missions in accordance with the 22 January 1944 operational [operativnyy] directive of the Black Sea Fleet military soviet, as well as with the combat battle instructions [boyevyye rasporyazheniya] and the directive of the front military soviet of 23 and 30 January.¹² These documents instructed that the submarines were to conduct aggressive combat operations [aktivnyye boyevyye deystviya] independently and in coordination with naval aviation against enemy warships, transports and water crossing equipment in the western part of the Black Sea, for the purpose of disrupting and even cutting the enemy lines of communication.¹³ Simultaneously, the submarines were assigned to conduct daily operational [operativnyy] reconnaissance while they were in their positions and in transit. At the beginning of the year accomplishment of these missions was complicated due to harsh winter conditions. The difficulties were also exacerbated due to limited repair capabilities. For example, in January-March approximately 40 percent of the submarines of the listed strength of the BPL [submarine brigade] were operational [v stroyu].¹⁴ As a result, the effectiveness of submarine actions against enemy lines of communication significantly declined, and some ship crews were forced to remain at sea up to 35 days.¹⁵ Apropos of this, each operational [boyevyy] departure of the submarines was accompanied by strong fascist opposition. The presence of enemy radar and hydroacoustic equipment, and extensive network of radar stations seriously interfered with the operations of our submarines. Submarine chasers equipped with hydroacoustical apparatus, and armed with depth charges, automatic cannons, and heavy machineguns represented the greatest danger. Four squadrons of enemy seaplanes based at Konstantsa systematically conducted aerial reconnaissance. The crossings of large convoys, as a rule, were supported by aviation, which searched for submarines along the convoy route. Our command considered all this, and took the necessary measures to ensure the security of the

submarines. Thus, special rules for their cruising and combat actions [boevyye deystviya], and specific guidance for commanders were worked out. They set forth requirements and recommendations pertaining to various situations. It was prohibited, for example, to maneuver extensively near the coast in areas of radar platforms, or to be in an awash condition in daylight. After a torpedo attack, during evasion of pursuit it was prescribed for the submarines to dive quickly to maximum possible depth, or to escape into the dark part of the horizon. Accomplishment of these and other instructions facilitated the actions of the commanders, raised the level of their tactical training, and provided for highly effective torpedo attacks.

During the first three months of 1944, submarines accomplished a total of 17 operational departures [boevyye vykhod]. In 10 cases they had contact with the enemy, and in 7 they carried out torpedo attacks, 6 of them at night.¹⁶ The effectiveness of the operations [deystviy] by the submarines on the enemy sea lines of communication could have been even higher in that period, had closer coordination between them and other naval branches been maintained. For example, more often they operated against warships and vessels that they themselves had detected.¹⁷ Summing up the results of submarine operations [deystviy] in the first quarter of 1944, the Black Sea Fleet headquarters noted a very important shortcoming: a lack of coordination with aviation. Not one of the 36 convoys and warships detected by aerial reconnaissance was attacked by submarines.¹⁸

Submarines displayed high results in the course of an operation [operatsiya] to disrupt enemy lines of communication conducted by the Black Sea Fleet, at the decision of the VGK Headquarters, from 8 April through 12 May. They fought the convoys off the coasts of Romania and in the open sea. The operation [operatsiya] pursued the following objectives: in the first stage to prevent reinforcement of the grouping of enemy forces in the Crimea; and in the second stage to ruin the evacuation of the 17th German Army from the Crimean Peninsula. To carry out these objectives, in accordance with a Headquarters directive, the Fleet assigned submarines as well as other branches of arms.¹⁹ Already in March intensified preparation of the submarines began, the main components of which were the forced placing in operation [vvod v stroy] of the boats under repair, and raising the tactical competence of the officers. Taking into account the shortcomings noted by the Black Sea Fleet Headquarters in the first quarter, the brigade headquarters issued a preliminary operational instruction [boevoye nastavleniye] on coordination between submarines and aviation on the lines of communication,²⁰ and detailed matters of communication with the headquarters of coordinating forces and units. Operational control documents [operativnyye dokumenty] were also carefully developed. They provided, in particular, for reliable (direct and feedback) radio communications between the

brigade commander's command post and submarines at sea, and of individual boats with reconnaissance aircraft and one another.

During preparations for the operation [operatsiya], the BPL headquarters carried out a tactical exercise with the division and crew commanders on the topic that corresponded to the forthcoming combat operations [boevyye deystviya]. The division commanders, in turn, organized several tactical exercises with the ship officers.

The Black Sea Fleet embarked upon the operation [operatsiya] on the night of 8-9 April. On 11-12 April another five submarines supplemented the two that were at sea. By 19 April the overall number of combat ready submarines reached 12, and by the end of the month 13. A new geographical division of 18 positions was introduced for them.²¹ This enabled the BPL commander to concentrated submarines during the operation [operatsiya] where the most intensive movement of enemy vessels was observed. Within the boundaries of their position the submarines were to carry out independent convoy search operations [samostoyatelniy poisk konvoya]. If the enemy changed routes, the BPL commander, based on aerial reconnaissance data, issued an order to the submarine commanders to move to other positions. This method of using the submarines was called positional-maneuver. It made it possible, with an insufficient number of submarines, but with well organized coordination among them and with reconnaissance aviation, to monitor a substantial area and actively affect the entire extent of the enemy lines of communication linking Sevastopol with the Romanian ports.

For example, the men of Guards Submarine M-35 (Capt Lt V. M. Prokofyev, commander) achieved significant successes. On 23 April, from a distance of six cable's lengths, the submarine attacked and sunk the 2,800 ton displacement tanker Ossag, which the day before had been damaged by our aviation. On the night of 9-10 May, during recharging of the storage batteries, the submarine was attacked by an enemy plane. During its dive, the input hatch of compartment six was knocked out from an explosion of high explosive bombs, and water began to enter through it. Having eliminated the damage, the crew continued to accomplish the combat mission. On 11 May, from a distance of three cable lengths, the submarine torpedoed an enemy transport. The attack was carried out at night, from periscope depth, which was an uncommon tactical technique for the combat operations [deystviya] of Black Sea Fleet submarines.²² Other crews also achieved high results. The successful actions by the BPA were noted by the fleet headquarters, and the Main Naval Headquarters, which analyzed the results of the participation of fleet forces in the Crimean Operation [operatsiya]. In particular, GMSH [Main Naval Staff] especially pointed out the fact of the close cooperation among the submarine commanders, as well as their extensive use of cruising in allocated areas, which improved the effectiveness of searching and provided for rapid closing with the enemy.²³

A positive role was also played by the coordination of submarines with aviation, which made strikes against areas adjacent to the zones of operations of the submarines, and guided them by radio to convoys and individual targets.

With the enemy loss of the Crimean ports, his lines of communication were greatly shortened, which narrowed the area of operations [rayon deystviy] of our submarines. The number of their positions changed often in this period, depending on the intensity of movement of the enemy warships and other vessels. Thus, in July there were only two positions, and in August five (first BPL was allotted three, and second BPL two positions).²⁴ The fascists maintained the capability to pilot convoys only among four ports (Sulina, Konstantsa, Varna, and Burgas). A special feature of these lines was the fact that they ran close to the coast, and were covered by strong minefields throughout their extent. Moreover, in view of their short length even slow-running enemy warships could negotiate the distance during the hours of darkness. The lines of communication were maintained mainly by small vessels protected by shore batteries with good security, and were characterized by low intensity. Thus, from 13 May through 9 September 80 convoys and individual warships passed through here.²⁵ All this hampered the combat actions [boyevyye deystviye] of our submarines. At the time, there were 12 submarines on the lines of communication, which had 21 combat contacts with the enemy. They carried out 16 torpedo attacks, of which eight involved a torpedo launch, and sunk five enemy vessels.²⁶

The experience of using Black Sea Fleet submarines in 1944 confirmed the importance of this branch of arms, which was responsible for 33 percent of the aggregate tonnage lost by the enemy in the Black Sea theater.²⁷ Submarines played a special role in the battle against fascist convoys during the Crimean Operation [operatsiya] (8 April-12 May 1944). Along with aviation, they deprived the enemy of the capability to supplement his force groupings, ruined the schedules for waging active operations [aktivnye deystviya], and limited the defense capability of enemy units and large units. For example, the sinking of one medium tanker deprived 1,500 bombers or 5,000 fighters of a refueling.²⁸

The success of torpedo firing by submarines depended largely on the position of the salvo. Those commanders who attacked from a distance of 2-6 cable lengths achieved the best results, since at a greater distance the enemy, having detected the torpedo or its track, succeeded in evading. The effectiveness of the actions by commanders and crews depended overall on the skills acquired by the submariners, both during combat missions and military training. In 1944 much attention was devoted to the latter. Besides training in offices and on action stations when the submarines were at piers, training departures to sea were planned. Careful study and

employment of combat experience acquired in their own fleets, as well as in the Northern and Red Banner Baltic fleets played a considerable role in improving the skill of the submariners.

It should be noted that the conditions for operations [deystviya] by Black Sea Fleet submarines were unfavorable during the war. The enemy lines of communication were located in coastal areas, and were well protected by minefields. The segments of waterway between ports were short, and the intensity of the lines of communication was low. The enemy used mainly small vessels for his shipments. All of this, in combination with strong convoy protection, which consisted of surface ships and aviation, hampered the actions of our submarines.

At the beginning of the war coordination, both among submarines at sea, and between submarines and aviation, was almost absent. Beginning in 1943 the episodic nature of such coordination became more systematic, due to new technical equipment provided the submarines. This was especially manifested during the 1944 Crimean Operation [operatsiya]. The reliability of construction and autonomy of navigation of the submarines also increased, which made it possible to cover extensive areas of shipping, compared to the first period of the war, with a relatively small number of submarines. The torpedo weapons with which the boats were equipped operated without a hitch. The tactical and technical indices of the torpedo apparatuses, torpedoes and firing instruments were high. At the same time, the latter were continuously improved, thereby stipulating further development of the methods of using the submarines and of carrying out torpedo attacks (from positional to positional-maneuver and cruising in individual areas; from firing of a single torpedo to salvo firing by a torpedo spread, etc.). Submarines operated continuously, decisively and boldly on the enemy Black Sea lines of communication, which was largely ensured by purposeful party political work carried out in the pre-voyage period, and directly at sea on the boats.

The experience of submarine combat operations [boyevyye deystviya] during the war, in particular in 1943-1944, also disclosed a number of shortcomings, which were instructive in and of themselves. Thus, it was necessary to improve the technical equipping of the submarines. This shortcoming was felt especially in the first period of the war. The fleet lacked well equipped and protected bases, as well as repair enterprises, which reduced the capability for organizing reliable submarine defense at their bases, for continuous and complete support of operational departures [boyevyy vykhod], and for rapid restoration of the combat effectiveness of damaged submarines. The small number of submarines in operation [v stroyu] did not enable us to maintain all enemy Black Sea lines of communication under their continuous and complete influence.

Footnotes

*See VOYENNO-ISTORICHESKIY ZHURNAL, No 6, 1976, pp 46-53 concerning combat operations of Black Sea Fleet submarines in 1941-1942.

1. "TsVMA" [Central Naval Archives], Folio 10, File 32853, p 22.

2. N. G. Kuznetsov, "Kursom k pobede" [The Path to Victory], Moscow, Voyenizdat, 1975, p 271.

3. Ibid.

4. Ibid., pp 272-273.

5. By order of the people's commissar of the navy of 9 August 1942, the submarine brigade was organized by combining the 1st and 2d brigades and 10 separate submarine divisions. The submarine brigade commanders were: from August 1942 Rear Adm P. I. Boltunov; from February 1943 Capt 1st Rank A. V. Krestovskiy; from January 1944 Capt 1st Rank M. G. Solovyev ("TsVMA," Folio 10, File 39641, p 1; File 37574, p 67; File 17714, pp 320-328).

6. Meister, J. "Der Seekrieg in den Osteuropaschen Gewassern 1941-1945," Munich, 1957, p 289.

7. "Istoriya Velikoy Otechestvennoy voyny Sovetskogo Soyuza 1941-1945 gg" [History of the Great Patriotic War of the Soviet Union 1941-1945], Vol 3, Moscow, Voyenizdat, 1964, p 423.

8. "Boyevoy put Sovetskogo Voyenno-Morskogo Flota" [Combat Journey of the Soviet Navy], Moscow, Voyenizdat, 1974, p 364.

9. V. I. Achkasov, N. B. Pavlovich, "Sovetskoye voyenno-morskoye iskusstvo v Velikoy Otechestvennoy voynye" [Soviet Naval Art in the Great Patriotic War], Moscow, Voyenizdat, 1973, p 307.

10. In 1942 theseoy Otechestvennoy voynye" [Soviet Naval Art in the Great Patriotic War], Moscow, Voyenizdat, 1973, p 307.

10. In 1942 these losses were 28,007 registered gross tons (see "Porazheniye germanskogo imperializma vo vtoroy mirovoy voynye" [The Defeat of German Imperialism in World War II], Moscow, Voyenizdat, 1960, p 121).

11. V. I. Achkasov, N. B. Pavlovich, "Ukazaniye sochineniy" [Index of Works], p 307.

12. "TsVMA," Folio 10, File 32952, p 1; File 32856, p 3.

13. Subsequently, the Main Naval Headquarters (GMSH) evaluated the mission of cutting the enemy lines of communication as unrealistic. According to the Black Sea Fleet Headquarters, in order to carry it out three or

four submarines would have to be at the positions simultaneously. The Fleet did not have the capability to send more than two or three submarines to sea simultaneously ("TsVMA," Folio 32, File 13990, p 1).

14. V. I. Achkasov, N. . Pavlovich, "Ukazaniye sochineniy," p 312.

15. "TsVMA," Folio 10, File 34574, p 104.

16. Ibid., Folio 32, File 13990, p 1.

17. Ibid., p 2; File 32856, p 26.

18. Ibid., File 13990, p 2.

19. A. M. Gakkel, A. N. Zamchalov, K. V. Penzin, "Istoriya voyenno-morskogo iskusstva" [The History of Naval Art], Leningrad, Izdatelstvo VMA, 1980, p 40.

20. "TsVMA," Folio 10, File 37574, p 105.

21. A. M. Gakkel, A. N. Zamchalov, K. V. Penzin, "Ukazaniye sochineniy" [Index of Works], p 41.

22. "TsVMA," Folio 10, File 32952, p 12.

23. Ibid., File 34574, p 110.

24. Based on a people's commissar of the navy order of 9 June 1944, the Black Sea Fleet submarine brigade was reorganized into the 1st Sevastopol Submarine Brigade, 2d Submarine Brigade and Separate Training Division ("TsVMA," Folio 32, File 18300, p 540).

25. "TsVMA," Folio 10, File 334574, p 132.

26. Ibid., p 133.

27. V. I. Achkasov, N. V. Pavlovich, "Ukazaniye sochineniy," p 317.

28. A. M. Gakkel, A. N. Zamchalov, K. V. Penzin, "Ukazaniye sochineniy," p 46.

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Baltic Fleet Ship Patrol Duty in the War Years
00010037d Moscow VOYENNO-ISTORICHESKIY
ZHURNAL in Russian No 7, Jul 88 (signed to press
24 Jun 88) pp 25-29

[Article by Capt 3d Rank S.L. Mitin, Candidate of Historical Sciences: "Baltic Fleet Ship Patrol Duty in the War Years"]

[Text] One of the types of daily combat activity of fleet forces in the war years was ship patrol duty. It was organized for the purpose of detecting enemy naval and

air forces, warning forces being protected about the threat, delaying and pinning down actions by enemy ships and aircraft, as well as taking on their first strike.

Depending on their purpose, patrols were subdivided into close (base), which operated in the areas of naval bases (VMB) and temporary basing areas of ship forces; distant (sea) to a distance of up to 100 miles from the VMB; and cruise—for the entire route of the protected ships. In addition, each of them had special features: service was carried out on a line or at an individual point; was mobile or stationary; was day, night, around the clock or low visibility; and included one or two ships. All of these special features were stipulated by the situation, the importance and size of missions being fulfilled, the nature of actions by enemy forces, the condition of the sea and weather, meteorological conditions, the presence of combat ready ships, and the amount of fuel and ammunition. Night patrols were dispatched mainly in areas that were observed by shore observation posts in the daytime, paired patrols on threatened axes of enemy ship actions, and stationary patrols were used most often when there was a shortage of fuel and limited time left prior to the next equipment overhaul period, as well as when it was necessary to enhance the effectiveness of acoustic observation in the hours of darkness and at times of low visibility.

To increase the combat stability of the patrols, support forces were deployed near the lines of observation. In addition to various ships, depending on the type of patrol they had aircraft and shore batteries. In 1944-1945, taking the experience that had been acquired into account, mobile patrol support groups, including armored boats, were created. They moved to the most threatened axes and to a distance that enabled them to deploy and enter battle in a timely manner.

The intensity of the Baltic Fleet patrol service changed frequently during the course of the war. In June 1941, for example, eight close patrols were deployed in the Kronstadt area, two in the Khanko area and four in the Libava area. Distant patrols (in view of the substantial threat from enemy aviation) were dispatched in limited numbers, only in the mouth of the Gulf of Finland and the Irben Strait. As defensive mine laying was completed they were removed.¹

The loss of several naval bases by the fleet, and the reduction of its operational [operativnyy] zone led to a corresponding change in the patrol service system. From mid-July 1941, 15 ships patrolled in the Kronstadt area, in accordance with a new scheme. In the Tallinn naval base zone patrols were dispatched each time to a newly designated area.²

After the transfer of the main fleet forces from Tallinn to Kronstadt, particular attention was paid to three areas: the western (from Gogland Island to Seyvyaste Cape), eastern (east of Seyvyaste Cape to Lisiy Nos Cape), and the area of the Neva Inlet (east of Lisiy Nos Cape). Six

and 13 around-the-clock patrols were deployed in the first and second areas respectively, and 10 night patrols in the third area³. Their actions were seasonal in nature; i.e., were conducted during the navigable period. When ice formation began the ships ceased their activity, and resumed it only after the water was clear of ice. The structure of the system and procedure for the use of the allocated forces changed. Thus, in the first half of May 1942, for convenience in controlling the patrols, the boundary line between the first and second areas was shifted from Seyvyaste Cape to the Shepelevskiy lighthouse. The names of these areas also changed: the western began to be called the area of the Island Fortified Sector; the eastern was called the Kronstadt Area. The ships in these areas were deployed on 8 and 10 lines respectively, and those in the third area (Neva Inlet) were deployed at 10 points.⁴

In summer and fall 1942, in connection with the increased activeness of enemy forces striving to reinforce the blockade of Leningrad, an additional four patrols moved forward in the area of the Island Fortified Sector. In the Kronstadt area (mainly for the purpose of detecting minelaying activities and opposing them) up to 38 boats and sloops went to sea at night, and there were 9 such boats sent out in the Neva Inlet area. In 1943, up to 44 patrols were sent out in the areas of the Island (former Island Fortified Sector) and Leningrad naval bases, as well as in the Kronstadt area.⁵

In March 1944, after the Soviet command had conducted the Leningrad-Novgorod offensive operation [operatsiya], the operational [operatsionnaya] zone of the fleet expanded, which again influenced the intensity of the patrolling service and entailed regular changes in its system. In the area of the newly formed Luga and Island naval bases, 13 and 5 patrols were dispatched respectively, and 12 patrols were sent out in the Kronstadt area.⁶ From the end of June, they began to be sent also to the newly created Vyborg Fortified Sector.

The Tallinn Naval Defensive Area (MOR) was organized in the course of the Baltic Offensive Operation [operatsiya] (14 September-24 November 1944). In accordance with the new scheme, the patrols were to move out to the area of Kronstadt, the Island Base, and the Tallinn MOR. However, due to a shortage of boats, the plan was not fully implemented, and an abbreviated variant was used. The ships went to sea until the beginning of ice formation. At the beginning of April 1945 their departures resumed, but only to support the security of Tallinn and Libava. In the other areas the patrols did not deploy until the end of the war, due to the serious ice situation and shortage of ships.

The ships conducted not only passive observation of the enemy at sea, but also active combat operations [deystviya], which can be judged from this table, which makes it possible to conclude that there was a gradual buildup in the role of ship patrols. Thus, from this it is evident that the number of clashes at sea in the third year of the

war, compared with the first, almost tripled. The patrols themselves also were substantially strengthened. This enabled them to pin down the actions of a large number of enemy ships: in 1941—37; in 1943—almost four times more (see table).

Combat Operations [deystviya] of Baltic Fleet Ship Patrol Service in 1941-1943*

Year	Number of Sea Battles	Ships involved	
		Soviet Ships	Enemy Ships
1941	11	12	37
1942	13	21	73
1943	30	58	146

*Table based on archival data. See: "TsVMA," Folio 92, Work 028580, File 3, p 12; Folio 9, File 34104, p 76.

Engaging enemy ship forces in battle, the patrols were repeatedly subjected to attacks by his aircraft. In 1942, for example, the latter carried out 433 such attacks, and in 1943 accomplished 536.⁷

To oppose enemy ships and aircraft more effectively, in 1944 armored small sub chasers and armored ocean-going boats began to be allocated to the patrols and their supporting mobile groups. In response, the enemy stepped up the activity of his submarines, which began to attack our ships, and sink and damage them with torpedoes. In July alone, four boats were destroyed or damaged.⁸ In order to avoid losses, the latter began to maneuver in an anti-submarine zigzag, and to listen periodically to the underwater horizon with hydroacoustical instruments. Special anti-submarine defense search and strike groups were created, which went to sea on call when enemy submarines were detected, or independently to search for and destroy them. Owing to these measures, our patrol ships not only had no losses, but were not even damaged from the actions of enemy submarines. At the same time, their attacks bore results. Thus, on 30 July 1944 boat MO-103 (Sr Lt A. P. Kolenko, commander) sunk submarine V-250 in the northern part of Bjerkezund. To designate the course of the detected submarine and move precisely into the attack, at calculated points boxes of provisions were thrown from the boat. This measure was necessary since at the time the hydroacoustical apparatus was being repaired.⁹

Information about the surface, air and mine situation was gained mainly through visual observation under conditions of good visibility. The underwater situation, and the surface situation under conditions of limited visibility, were determined with the aid of hydroacoustical instruments. For example, on 15 September 1942 boats MO-105 and MO-107 were patrolling on Line Number 12 in the area of Bjorkje Island. At 2255 hours the hydroacoustic technician on MO-107 detected the noise of motors. On MO-105 the hydroacoustical instruments were turned on periodically; therefore, the

report on the approaching targets was received there from MO-107. After a few minutes 11 boats showed up in the darkness. Due to their timely detection, the patrol was able to prepare for battle, and repulse the attack successfully.¹⁰

The majority of the boats involved in the patrols were equipped with Tamir or Tsefey hydroacoustical stations, the detecting capability of which was low. However, the good training of the shipboard specialists compensated for the technical deficiencies of the equipment and made it possible to achieve significant results when these stations were used under conditions of limited visibility. Thus, in October-December 1942, when the duration of the hours of darkness had significantly increased compared to the spring-summer period, the hydroacoustical technicians stood watch for a total of 3,250 hours (in July-September, for example, they stood watch 1,090 hours). They were responsible for the majority of the naval targets detected.¹¹

The increased submarine threat beginning mid-July 1944 again confirmed the poor level of equipping of the ships with means of detecting and destroying submarines, and their inadequate preparation for accomplishing anti-submarine defense missions. For example, in 1943-1944 enemy submarines were detected by our ships 114 times, of which 99 were visual sightings and only 15 were with the aid of hydroacoustical instruments.¹²

Overall planning and organization of the patrol service was assigned to the fleet headquarters, and in the zones of the naval bases, to their headquarters. The direct mission of dispatching the close patrols was assigned to the water area protection (OVR) command of the bases; and that of the distant patrols to the commanders of the forces from which the ships were allocated.

The fleet OVR commander controlled the patrol service, and the corresponding chiefs controlled the service in individual areas. Since new areas were formed and former areas were abolished or modified in the course of the war, the system of control in them also changed. Thus, in June-September 1941 direct control of the patrols in the western area was assigned to the commander of the separate division of escort ships. From 16 September patrolling in this area was accomplished mainly by minesweepers, and the commander of the minesweeping detachment began to be responsible for its organization. In the eastern area it was controlled by the commander of the fighter detachment; in the Neva Inlet until 28 September by the commander of the fleet OVR, and until November by the commander of the Leningrad VMB [Naval Base]. From the second half of May 1942 responsibility for the organization and conduct of patrols in the first of these areas, renamed an area of the Island Fortified Sector, was assigned to the sector commander; in the second area (Kronshtadt) it was assigned to the fighter detachment commander; and in the third (Neva Inlet) to the Leningrad VMB Water Area Protection Commander.¹³

In 1943-1945 control was organized in accordance with the redistribution of forces that had taken place. For example, from June 1944 ships of the base OVR patrolled in the area of the Luga VMB; those of the fighter detachment of the Kronstadt Naval Defensive Area OVR patrolled the Island VMB and Kronstadt; and those of the fighter detachment, as well as the brigade of skerry ships patrolled the Vyborg Fortified Sector.¹⁴

On the whole the Baltic Fleet ship patrol service accomplished the missions assigned to it in the war years, which contributed significantly to the stable defense of naval bases and islands, the securing of sea lines of communication and troop shipments, and the deployment of submarines.

Based on the operational [operativnyy] circumstances in the theater, command of the fleet and naval bases adjusted the organization and missions of the patrols in a timely manner. Changes were caused by a number of reasons, chief among which were: reduction or increase in the fleet operational zone, strengthening the role of aviation and submarines in the war at sea, and development of technical means of observation. Primarily close patrols were sent out under conditions of constrained basing. Mainly seaward patrol craft were involved in these patrols. During daylight hours aviation operated frequently. The danger of enemy submarines appearing at bases and in narrows made it necessary to send out special anti-submarine patrols.

Equipping the ships with technical means of observation and communications was of great importance in the successful accomplishment of the assigned missions. The lack of radar on the ships reduced their effectiveness and caused great tension, and weak antiaircraft weapons under conditions of enemy air superiority, insufficient combat stability, and late arrival of support forces led to losses of patrol boats. Up to the end of the war organization of coordination with supporting ships and aircraft was never successfully set up for once and for all. Important shortcomings were inherent in planning and control. In large part this resulted from the changing situation. Thus, in 1941-1942 the patrol forces had to oppose enemy aviation to a larger extent, in 1943 and the first half of 1944 they opposed more boats, and from the second half of 1944 until the end of the war they opposed more enemy submarines.

At the present time, foreign specialists assert, in connection with the development and equipment of naval forces with nuclear missile weapons, the increase in the detection capabilities of radar and sonar, and the enhanced role of naval aviation, ship patrols are losing their importance and even their advisability. Nevertheless, previously acquired combat experience should not be disregarded, since even at the present time situations may occur in which the use of seemingly obsolete forces, methods and techniques may turn out to be most effective.

Footnotes

1. "TsVMA" [Central Naval Archives], Folio 9, File 7435, p 326; V. I. Achkasov, N. B. Pavlovich, "Sovetskoye voyenno-morskoye iskusstvo v Velikoy Otechestvennoy voynye" [Soviet Naval Art in the Great Patriotic War], Moscow, Voenizdat, 1973, p 389.
2. "TsVMA," Folio 92, Work 028586, File 1, p 255.
3. Ibid.
4. Ibid., Work 028480, File 3, p 5.
5. Ibid., Folio 45, File 34964, p 96.
6. Ibid., File 27905, pp 12-14.
7. Ibid., Folio 92, Work 028580, File 3, p 12; Folio 9, File 34104, p 76.
8. Ibid., Folio 72, File 27897, p 4.
9. Ibid., pp 8-9.
10. Ibid., Folio 92, Work 025344, File 62, p 248.
11. Ibid., File 64, p 95.
12. Ibid., Folio 9, File 33384, p 2.
13. Ibid., Folio 92, Work 028480, File 3, p 5.
14. Ibid., Folio 72, File 27893, p. 12; Folio 90, File 25140, pp 2-3.

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International Assistance of Soviet Partisans to the Antifascist Movement of the Countries of Central and Southeast Europe

00010037e Moscow VOYENNO-ISTORICHESKIY ZHURNAL in Russian No 7, Jul 88 (Signed to press 24 Jun 88) pp 30-37

[Article by Maj Gen V.N. Andrianov, Doctor of Historical Sciences: "International Assistance of Soviet Partisans to the Antifascist Movement of the Countries of Central and Southeast Europe"]

[Text] In 1943 and early 1944, as a result of the victories of the Soviet Army, the antifascist movement in the occupied countries of Europe rose to a new and higher level. In many states it took on the nature of an armed struggle. However, large scale development of the partisan movement was retarded due to a lack of experienced command cadres, weapons and ammunition. The Soviet Union could not remain indifferent to the difficulties of the antifascist forces. Throughout the entire war it gave varied assistance to the Resistance Movement: made and transferred national maps to the occupied countries;

supplied means of propaganda and agitation, weapons, ammunition, and medicines; evacuated wounded to the Soviet rear; sent out Soviet partisan formations that had rich experience of fighting in the enemy rear, to operate on the territory of contiguous states.

In winter and spring 1944 Soviet forces, having developed active offensive actions on the Right Bank Ukraine, had neared the borders of Poland, Romania, Czechoslovakia and Hungary. In the first days of April 1944, at the initiative of the Central Buro of Polish Communists, the Polish Partisan Movement Headquarters (PShPD), headed by Aleksandr Zavadskiy, a prominent figure in the Polish Workers' Party, was created in the USSR to assist Polish partisans. At the request of our Polish comrades, S. O. Pritytskiy, one of the leaders of the antifascist struggle in the western oblasts of Belorussia, and Col I. G. Starinov, deputy chief of the Ukrainian Headquarters of the Partisan Movement (UShPD) were named his deputies. Both possessed great experience in organizing combat actions [boevyye deystviya] in the enemy rear. Other staff commanders and partisan specialists of the UShPD were also brought in to work in the PShPD.

Representatives of the communist parties of Czechoslovakia, Hungary, and Romania in June 1944 asked the Central Committee, KP(b) [Communist Party (of Bolsheviks)] of the Ukraine to help them better organize the antifascist struggle in their countries.¹ Having examined the letter from their Czechoslovakian comrades, the Central Committee, KP(b) of the Ukraine resolved: "To satisfy the request of the Central Committee, Communist Party of Czechoslovakia, for assistance in developing the partisan movement on the territory of the Czechoslovak Republic."² Favorable decisions were also made to appeals from the other communist parties.

The Ukrainian and Belorussian ShPD [Partisan Movement Headquarters] helped the peoples of Central and Southeastern Europe to develop the antifascist struggle still more widely. Special training centers were created to train national partisan cadres: commanders, explosives specialists, reconnaissance personnel, radio operators. Thus, more than 1,500 Polish patriots alone were trained in UShPD training centers. Representatives of the Communist Party central committees selected candidates for training.

In spring and summer 1944 several dozen partisan organizing groups were sent from the Soviet Union to Poland, Czechoslovakia, Hungary and Romania. These groups consisted of patriots, who were ready to fight for the interests of their homeland, tested in battles, and who had received necessary training in training centers, and several experienced Soviet partisans, who acted as staff commanders, mine-specialist instructors, radio operators and doctors. Once in place these small formations grew rapidly into large detachments and large units (especially in Poland and Czechoslovakia). Overall, in 1944 12 organizing groups were thrown into Poland, 53

into Slovakia, 11 into Bohemia and Moravia, more than 10 groups into Hungary, and 12 detachments and 8 groups into Romania.³ Weapons, ammunition, explosives and other military equipment were transferred to the partisans from the Soviet Union.

As the western oblasts of the USSR were liberated from the enemy the partisan formations ceased their activities. Their personnel joined the ranks of active army units who were sent to work in the economy. Some of the most experienced and combat effective units, on instructions from the Ukrainian and Belorussian partisan movement headquarters, continued to fight in the enemy rear on the lands of contiguous states, rendering international assistance to the workers of Poland, Czechoslovakia, Romania and Hungary. It should be noted that in the countries of Western, Central and Southeast Europe occupied by Fascist Germany, already by late 1941 and early 1942 numerous partisan groups and detachments were operating, created by soldiers and commanders who had fled captivity, as well as Soviet citizens who had broken out of fascist enslavement. Many of these formations, which operated in Poland and Czechoslovakia, later merged into Soviet partisan units that arrived from the USSR.

A substantial number of soviet partisans located in Poland, Czechoslovakia, Hungary and Romania in 1944, consisted of those who had raided across the state border or were dropped by air. Moreover, numerous detachments and large units arose on the base of groups of Soviet Army reconnaissance subunits and state security organs, thrown in to accomplish special missions. Often the situation was such that reconnaissance troops were forced to switch to partisan methods of combat. The activity of Soviet partisans was led through local partisan movement headquarters and other Soviet organs of the VKP(b) Central Committee and of the communist parties of the union republics.

Soviet partisans began to enter Polish territory at the request of Krayova Rada Narodova in early 1944.⁴ In February the 1st Ukrainian Partisan Division imeni S. A. Kovpak, under the command of P. P. Vershigora, fought its way in a raid through the territories of the Lublin and Warsaw voievodstvos (see diagram). Despite the difficult conditions caused by the spring thaws and non-flying weather, and the shortage of ammunition and inability to evacuate wounded to the rear in connection with this, the Soviet patriots made telling strikes against enemy lines of communication and his small garrisons. Enemy attempts to surround and destroy the large unit failed.

Almost simultaneously with the Kovpak Division, the large units of I. N. Banov and M. I. Naumov entered Poland, and in spring the formations of V. A. Andreyev, I. A. Artyukhov, V. A. Karasev, G. V. Kovalev, M. Ya. Nadelin, N. A. Prokopyuk, S. A. Sankov, V. P. Chepiga, B. G. Shangin, I. P. Yakovlev, V. M. Yaremchuk, and others. Overall in 1944 7 large units, 26 separate

detachments⁵ and a large number of special groups of Soviet partisans, operating in raids or dropped by air from the Soviet Union, were making strikes here against the enemy rear areas. The main basing areas of Soviet partisan groups, detachments and large units that operated in Poland and Czechoslovakia are shown on the diagram.

It should be noted that it was very difficult to carry out raids into contiguous states. The personnel often did not know the language of the country where they would be operating, and had a weak impression of the culture, national customs, particularities of the administrative structure, as well as the conditions of the occupation regime. The main difficulty was that the enemy most of all directed the main efforts of counterreconnaissance and punitive forces toward destroying the Soviet partisan formations, since their appearance, as a rule, contributed to activating antifascist forces. Taking this into account, the partisans, despite their great experience in struggling in the enemy rear, prepared carefully for the raids.

Thus, N. A. Prokopyuk in his memoirs noted that before moving to Polish territory the brigade command and staff studied and evaluated in detail the internal political situation in the country and the displacement of resistance forces, and developed a political policy for the behavior of the large unit as a whole and each fighter individually. In response to the anti-Soviet propaganda that had been unbridled, in which the Polish reaction competed with Goebbels, the partisans decided to tell the Poles the truth about the Soviet Union and about the Red Army. As the detachments moved into the heart of Poland they became convinced that the population was filled with resolve to fight the Hitlerite invaders and was glad for assistance.⁶

In spring 1944, having crossed the Zapadnyy Bug, the brigade moved through the Parchevskiye Woods, southeast of Ostrow Lubski, and developed extensive political, military and reconnaissance activity. They reported to Bolshaya Zemlya information about operational [deystvuyushchiye] and false [lozhnyye] enemy airfields, his garrisons and defensive structures, and about military targets in Warsaw, Krakow, Lublin, Chelm, Biala Podlaska and other cities. Individual groups were systematically sent on combat missions from the temporary basing area. Frequently they carried out operations [boevyye zadaniya] a great distance from the base. Thus, a sabotage and reconnaissance group commanded by P. T. Gerilovich consisting of 12 men crossed the Vistula in May and began to accomplish missions in Kielce Voyevodstvo. It derailed six enemy trains, in one of which Wehrmacht cadets were travelling from Radom.

The formations that arrived in Poland from the USSR quickly established communications with local partisans and underground fighters, and developed joint active operations [aktivnyye deystviya]. They knocked out the

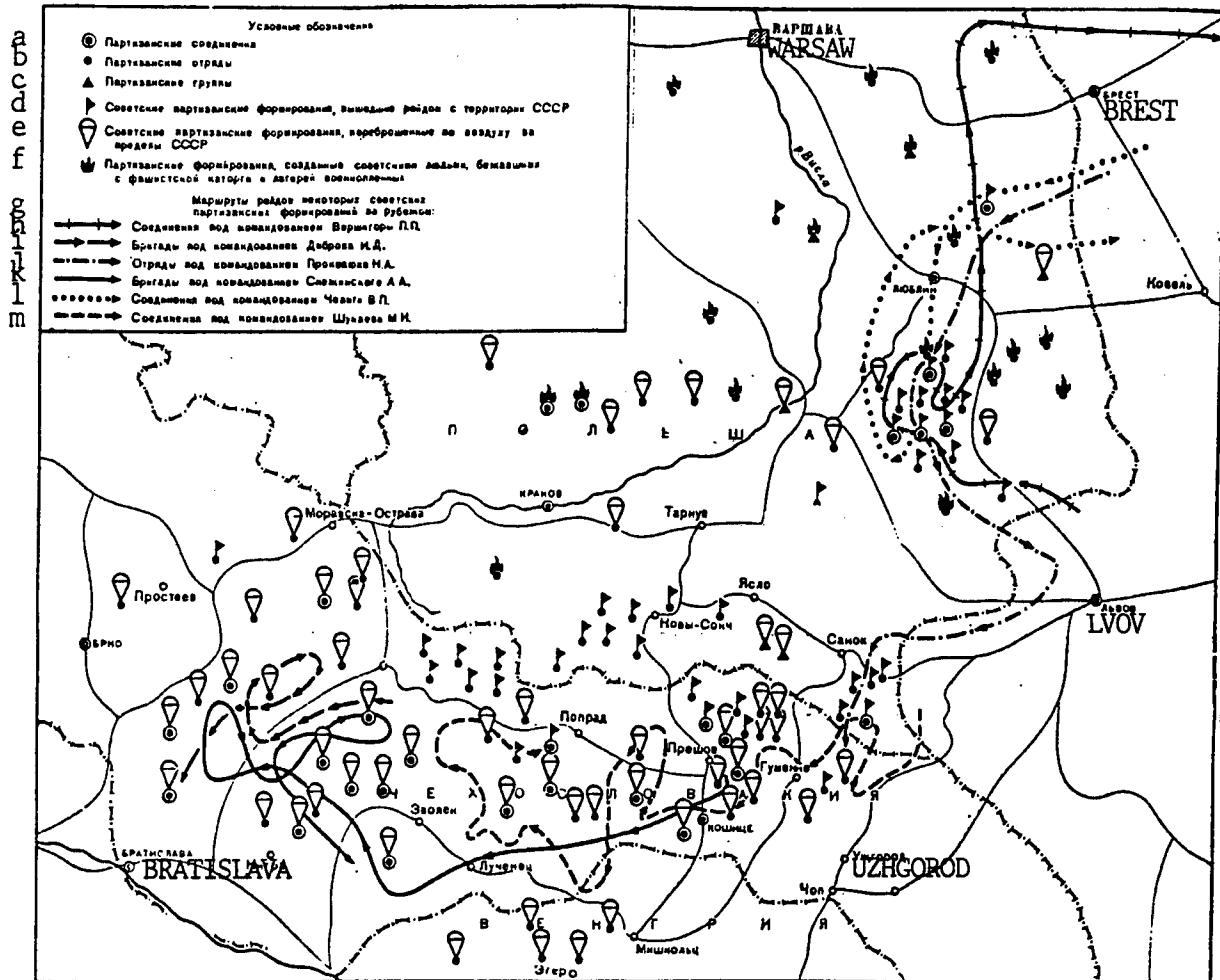
rail line in the Lvov-Warsaw, Rava-Russkaya-Yaroslav, and Bilgoraj-Zvezhinet sectors for a long period of time, and in the first half of 1944 alone destroyed 13 large fascist garrisons in rayon centers, urban settlements and at rail stations, including in Bilgoraj, Janow, Krasnobrud, Kzheshuv, Ulyanov, Tarnobrzeg, Turobin and Susetsa.⁷

The situation caused the fascist authorities serious concern. The occupiers could no longer handle the large forces of Soviet and Polish partisans, and Hitler's command began to gather regular forces in the Lublin area. In June 1944 the fascists, having concentrated three infantry divisions of regular forces and several separate units, supported by aviation, surrounded a large group of partisans in the Lipskiy and Janow woods. Approximately 3,000 men found themselves in the enemy ring: 5 detachments and 2 large units of Soviet, and 2 brigades and 1 detachment of Polish partisans, as well as 1 Soviet-Polish detachment. The correlation of forces was approximately 10:1 in the enemy's favor. Moreover, the enemy had artillery, tanks and aviation, which facilitated his actions on open terrain.⁸

The seriousness of the situation required combining the efforts against the punitive expedition, and centralization of control of military actions. On 13 July the partisan unit commanders met and chose a combined command headed by Lt Col N. A. Prokopyuk, commander of a Soviet large unit, and worked out a unified plan of action. Simultaneously, a headquarters of combined Polish-Soviet forces was organized, headed by Soviet Officer A. A. Gorovich.

The enemy began his attacks on the morning of 14 June. Fierce battles ensued. During the day the Hitlerites broke through the defense three times, but each time were thrown back to their attack position by decisive counterattacks. In this time the partisans beat back more than 50 attacks. The enemy lost up to 1,500 soldiers and officers killed and more than 2,000 wounded. On the night of 15 June the partisans broke through the enemy ring in a concentrated strike, and moved to Solskiy Woods, evacuating all wounded.⁹

In connection with the successful advance by the Soviet Army to the west and movement to the Vistula, in the second half of 1944 many Soviet partisan formations transferred their combat operations [boevyye deystviya] to the southern areas of Poland and into Czechoslovakia, where they continued to make effective strikes against the enemy. In the period 24 September-4 October 1944 alone, they knocked out 9 railroad bridges and derailed 19 enemy trains.¹⁰ They also operated energetically against industrial targets in the Silesian basin. Thus, on 26 September they blew up the three main boilers at the Sersha mine, 7 km north of Khtanuv. The work of the mine, the coal from which supported a power



LEGEND: a -- partisan large units; b -- partisan detachments; c -- partisan groups; d -- Soviet partisan detachments that raided from USSR territory; e -- Soviet partisan formationsair dropped outside of USSR boundaries; f -- partisan formations created by Soviets who fled from fascist captivity or POW camps; g -- routes of raids by some Soviet partisan formations abroad; h -- large unit commanded by P. P. Vershigora; i -- brigade commanded by I. D. Dibrov; j -- detachment commanded by N. A. Prokopyuk; k -- brigade commanded by A. A. Snezhinskiy; l -- large unit commanded by V. P. Chepiga; m -- large unit commanded by M. I. Shukayev

Operating Areas of Soviet Partisans on the Territory of Contiguous states (1944 - 1945)

plant, cracking factory, railroad and 12 plants, was halted for a long period of time. On 29 September two steam boilers at a military factory 4 km north of Sosnovets were blown up.¹¹

The movement of partisan organizing groups onto Czechoslovakian and Hungarian territory after a brief period of training began in summer 1944. From the end of July through August alone 24 such groups were landed on Slovakian territory.¹² They were commanded by Soviet partisans P. A. Velichko, Ye. P. Volyanskiy, I. D. Dibrov, A. S. Yegorov, V. A. Kuznetsov, V. P. Logvinenko, F. M. Makarov, D. M. Rezuto, A. S. Sadilenko, A. A. Snezhinskiy, and others. Owing to the active support of the local population, they were quickly supplemented with antifascist patriots, and some of them, which joined up with Slovakian detachments, turned into large partisan formations. Thus, I. D. Dibrov, the commander of one of them, organized a partisan brigade based on two Slovakian detachments. The groups of P. A. Velichko and A. S. Yegorov grew into brigades numbering 2,085 and 2,800 men each.¹³

In summer 1944, 11 Soviet-Hungarian organizing groups, numbering 166 men, were thrown into Hungary.¹⁴ By the end of the year approximately 2,500 patriots were already operating there. Hungarian communists and patriots who had been trained in antifascist schools in the Soviet Union were the leading corps of the detachments, which fought on territory that was under the power of the Horthy regime. The bulk of the organizing groups were transferred here via the UShPD.

Almost simultaneously with the landing of organizing groups on Czechoslovakian territory, Soviet partisan formations commanded by L. Ye. Berenshteyn, V. A. Karasev, V. A. Kvitinskiy, A. I. Kurov, V. S. Matsnev, A. P. Sharov, and others, began to conduct raids from Poland and the western Ukraine. A large unit commanded by Lt Col M. I. Shukayev fought its way into Czechoslovakia.

The appearance in Slovakia of mixed Soviet-Czechoslovak organizing groups and Soviet partisan detachments contributed to the development of the antifascist struggle there. This coincided with an important moment in the history of the heroic struggle of the Czechoslovakian people against the fascist enslavers—the Slovakian Armed Uprising (29 August-27 October 1944). At its outset there were 8,000 men in the local partisan formations that were the foundation of the armed strength of the rebelling people. Along with volunteers and soldiers who had crossed to the side of the rebels, they began stubborn battles against the attacking German Fascist forces.

At the end of September 1944 leaders of the Central Committee, Communist Party of Czechoslovakia were thrown into the liberated areas to assist the Slovak communists organize the armed struggle. The UShPD sent a group of commanders with them, headed by Col

A. N. Asmolov,¹⁵ who was named an advisor to the chief of the Partisan Movement Main Headquarters (GShPD), formed by the Slovak National Council on 16 September 1944.

Representatives of the UShPD quickly joined the work of the GShPD (Karol Shmidke, chief of staff). The sabotage service created at the headquarters, headed by Maj Yu. G. Filatov, quickly organized special courses to train mining and sabotage specialists. The GShPD sent instructors to all brigades and detachments, as well as detailed technical documentation for knocking out various enemy facilities. Owing to this, in a short period of time it succeeded in training approximately 250 mine specialists, and substantially improving the effectiveness of the sabotage activity of the partisans.

Large units under the command of M. I. Shukayev, N. A. Prokopyuk and others, who carried out raids here (see diagram) from southern Poland and the western Ukraine, also waged partisan warfare in eastern Slovakia. They blew up dozens of enemy trains and railroad bridges, and eliminated several fascist garrisons, including the headquarters of the 97th Light Inf Div. Detachments commanded by Ye. P. Volyanskiy, A. K. Lyakh, V. I. Magarit, D. B. Murzin, M. M. Perechinskiy, and K. K. Popov also operated actively in Slovakia.¹⁶

After the defeat of the Slovakian uprising, the commanders of the Soviet partisan formations helped the rebels shift in an organized way to other methods of struggle. Retreating to the mountains of Czechoslovakia, approximately 20,000 armed fighters continued to fight. In November-December 1944 alone, demolition specialists from the brigades of A. Yegorov, V. Kvitinskiy, E. Biyelik, A. Tsiprikh, and V. Prshikryl blew up 76 troop trains and 282 motor vehicles. During this period a total of 109 trains were derailed on the territory of Slovakia.¹⁷

As in Poland, organizing groups in Czechoslovakia rapidly established communications with local patriots and actively entered into the armed conflict. For example, a 19 man group commanded by N. V. Volkov was assault landed in September 1944, and after some time grew into the partisan brigade "Smert Fashizmu" [Death to Fascism] numbering approximately 600 men. Based on S. G. Morozov's group, which also assault landed in September at a strength of 19 men, the "Mstiteli" [Avengers] brigade numbering 345 fighters was created. Until its linkup with attacking Soviet Army units, it waged 34 battles, blew up 3 bridges and carried out 9 major acts of sabotage in the enemy rear.

Soviet-Czechoslovakian organizing groups began to arrive on the territory of Bohemia and Moravia from the Soviet rear starting in September 1944. By March 1945 their number reached 11. Detachments commanded by Soviet commanders V. M. Gerus, D. B. Murzin, M. Ya. Savel'yev, Ya. Ushyak, and others were sent to assist local partisans.¹⁸

From January 1945 until the liberation of Czechoslovakia, partisan detachments and brigades in the front line zone, fulfilling missions assigned by the Soviet command, operated in close tactical coordination with attacking Soviet Army forward units. The majority of these formations maintained communications with the UShPD and its representatives at the 4th Ukrainian Front military soviet. Thus, at the end of January 1945 the brigade commanded by P. A. Velichko, on instructions of the UShPD representative at the 4th Ukrainian Front military soviet, came down from Vysokiye Tatry, tore into the city of Liptovski-Gradok, engaged in street fighting, seized a bridge and held it until the arrival of Soviet forces. The large unit of A. M. Sadilenko established communications with reconnaissance subunits of the 42d Guards Rifle Division and coordinated its plans with the Soviet command to prevent the withdrawal of the 208th Hitlerite Inf Div to Chernyy Balog and Brezno. The large units blocked the enemy withdrawal route with barriers and mines, and set up ambushes. During the battles that took place as the enemy attempted to break out through the ravine, the partisans destroyed hundreds of Hitlerites, and on 31 January linked up with one of the regiments of the 42d Guards Rfl Div, and together with it tore into the city of Brezno.¹⁹

In the days of the May uprising of the Czech people the organizing group commanded by Ye. A. Olesinskiy, which had assault landed in early March 1945 in an area southwest of Prague and quickly linked up with the Czech antifascist underground, operated decisively. With its help, by 20 April the "Smert Fashizmu" large unit was created out of 10 disparate local partisan detachments. It numbered 1,750 armed fighters. The large unit liberated the cities of Pshibram, Dobzhish, Intse and Gostomitsa, and 57 villages, having cut the route to 3 enemy divisions attempting to enter the Czechoslovakian capital to suppress the uprising. Several of its detachments, under the command of M. Kh. Baranov, broke through enemy road blocks into Prague, linked up with the rebels, and fought together with them on the barricades.²⁰

The tactics of Soviet partisans waging combat operations [boyevyye deystviya] abroad were offensive in nature. The methods of operations [deystviya] of the detachments changed depending on changes in the situation. Ably maneuvering in the enemy rear, disrupting his communications and supply, and appearing unexpectedly in the most vulnerable areas, partisans did the enemy substantial damage. In October-November 1944 alone, detachments and large units subordinate to UShPD destroyed 12,919 Hitlerites in Czechoslovakia and Hungary, derailed 48 troop trains, blew up 24 railroad bridges, 1 tunnel, and 33 highway bridges, destroyed 22 planes, 41 tanks and armored vehicles, 273 motor vehicles, tractors and prime movers; destroyed 6 garrisons; knocked out 9 industrial facilities, a steamship depot, and a rail station, and destroyed 4 enemy military supply depots.²¹

Many of the partisan formations in which Soviet patriots fought were international in composition. In them Poles, Frenchmen, Czechs, Slovaks, Italians, Englishmen, Yugoslavs, Austrians, Belgians, Germans, Greeks, and representatives of many other nationalities fought along with USSR citizens. All the activity of these international forces was permeated by common goals, class solidarity and fraternal mutual assistance. Soviet partisans enjoyed exceptional authority among the foreign participants in the Resistance and the local population. By their selfless struggle against the fascist invaders, fearlessness, valor, nobility, honor, and moral purity they earned the love and respect of the peoples of those countries on whose lands they fought. The direct participation of Soviet partisans in the antifascist armed struggle on the territory of the contiguous states helped expand the Resistance Movement, and picked up its activities in the struggle against fascism. The all-round unselfish assistance by the Soviet Union to patriotic forces in the countries of central and southeast Europe contributed to the growth of antifascist forces, strengthening the combat effectiveness of partisan detachments, and turning them into a formidable force. Through their selfless struggle in the ranks of the resistance movement, Soviet people proved the great boundless strength of the ideas of proletarian internationalism, brotherhood and friendship of peoples.

Footnotes

1. "Istoriya Kommunisticheskoy partii Sovetskogo Soyuza" [History of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union], Vol 5, Book 1, Moscow, Politizdat, 1970, p 576.
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3. "Istoriya Kommunisticheskoy...," Vol 5, Book 1, p 577.
4. Individual groups of Soviet partisan reconnaissance troops from large units commanded by S. A. Kovpak, A. F. Fedorov, I. N. Banov, G. M. Linkov, and others, entered the territory of Poland back in 1943.
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12. "Istoriya vtoroy mirovoy voyny 1939-1945" [History of World War II 1939-1945], Vol 9, Moscow, Vojenizdat, 1978, p 229.
13. Samo Faltan, "Partisanska Voyna na Slovensku Osveta," Bratislava, 1959, pp 69-70.
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19. A. N. Asmolov, "Ukazatel sochineniy" [Index of Works], pp 309-310.
20. "Sovetskiy Soyuz v gody Velikoy Otechestvennoy voyny 1941-1945" [The Soviet Union in the Years of the Great Patriotic War 1941-1945], Moscow, Nauka, 1976, p 16.
21. "Gosudarstvennyy istoricheskiy arkhiv UkrSSR" [UkrSSR State Historical Archives], Folio 1, Work 14, File 905, pp 265-270.

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Special Features of Party Political Work in the Battle of Kursk
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[Article by Col (Ret) M. P. Demin, Candidate of Historical Sciences: "Special Features of Party Political Work in the Battle of Kursk"]

[Text] Forty-five years ago, in summer 1943, the Soviet Army gained a convincing victory over the German Fascist forces in the battle at Kursk. Fierce clashes on the Kursk Salient lasted from 5 July through 23 August, and were characterized by extreme intensity and dynamism. Hitler's operation, code name Citadel, in which the political and military leadership of Fascist Germany planned to take revenge for the defeat at Stalingrad,

suffered defeat. The German Fascist Army was faced with catastrophe. The strategic initiative shifted for once and for all into the hands of the Soviet command.

"The Battle of Kursk," stated Comrade M. S. Gorbachev in a speech at a ceremonial session in Kursk devoted to awarding the city the Order of the Patriotic War First Degree, "became a grand feat and a triumph of the armed forces and all the Soviet people. In the heroic Battle of Kursk, as in the other major clashes of the Great Patriotic War, the organizing and inspirational role of our Communist Party was displayed with full force. In this battle were displayed the unparalleled patriotism, unbending staunchness and courage, military skill and mass heroism of the Soviet people."¹

Valor and prowess were the norm of the conduct of our soldiers in the Battle of Kursk. For their feats in this clash more than 100,000 soldiers, sergeants, officers and generals were awarded orders and medals,² and more than 200 of those who especially distinguished themselves were awarded the title Hero of the Soviet Union.³ One hundred thirty divisions became Guards divisions, and 26 large units and units received the names Orel, Belgorod, Kharkov, and Karachev.⁴

Party political work played an important role in inculcating high moral-political and martial qualities in the men. It was structured and carried out on the basis of Leninist ideas on defense of the Socialist homeland, and of party and government decisions, and was characterized by high ideals and purposefulness. It made extensive use of the two volume 100,000 copy circulation works of V. I. Lenin published in 1943, and the concurrently published two volume collection of Lenin's documents. Lectures and reports on the topic "V. I. Lenin on Defense of the Socialist Homeland," "V. I. Lenin—Great Patriot of the Homeland," and others, were read to the Red Army soldiers. Officers studied the works of the great leader independently.

Special features of party political work in the Battle of Kursk were determined in large part by the specific nature of the preparatory period, which lasted more than 3 months. Commanders, political organs and party organizations, ably using the operational pause, in spring and summer 1943 did everything necessary to raise the moral and combat readiness of the forces for the decisive battles in the Battle of Kursk. The content and forms of ideological and political upbringing of the men were enriched. The main objective of this work, as before, was to form in the soldiers communist convictions, feelings of Soviet patriotism, friendship of the peoples of the USSR, and hatred toward the enemy. But now, following the victory at Stalingrad, it was based on demonstrating extensively the successes of the Soviet Army in the struggle against the German Fascist invaders, and popularizing the mass heroism and military skill of the soldiers and commanders. Political classes with the soldiers and sergeants, which were held regularly from

April through 1 July, and various agitation and propaganda measures, contributed to mobilizing the soldiers to selfless struggle against the enemy. Thus, in the Central Front lectures and reports were given on the topics: "The World Historical Victory of the Soviet Army at Stalingrad," "Mass Heroism of the Personnel and Combat Skill of the Forces—Most Important Factors in Military Successes," and others.

Patriotic upbringing of the soldiers based on examples of the heroic past of the Russian people was stepped up. On 25 May 1943 the Main Political Administration of the Soviet Army sent to the forces special topics for discussions, reports and lectures, as well as the book, "The Heroic Past of the Russian People," which contributed to the purposeful activity of political organs and party organizations.

The content of party political work stemmed from the military-strategic situation, the specific combat missions of the large units and units, and changes taking place in the organizational structure of the party political apparatus. Owing to the organizational role of the party and the heroic labor of the working class and kolkhoz peasantry, a powerful military industrial base was created in the country, and all-round assistance was provided to the front. The Soviet Army possessed everything necessary for an offensive. But, the Supreme High Command, considering the military-political situation, decided to conduct a deliberate defense, simultaneously preparing the forces for decisive offensive actions, for accomplishing a new and crucial mission: "To chase enemy forces during the summer and fall back behind the Smolensk, Sozh River, and middle and lower reaches of the Dnieper, as well as to eliminate the German Kuban Bridgehead."⁵ One of the main features of party political work in the Battle of Kursk—the organic unity of preparation of the soldiers for staunch defense and development in them of moral readiness for the offense—was determined by the assigned objective. This was expressed in the content and methods of organizational and ideological activity of the commanders and political workers. In its appeal to the forces at the beginning of the Battle of Kursk, the Central Front Military Soviet called upon the soldiers: "...to halt and grind up as many Hitlerite bandits as possible, and to prepare, as did the glorious fighters at Stalingrad, the conditions for a transition to a decisive offensive..."⁶

Introduction of a new organizational structure of the party political apparatus determined an important feature of party political work in the Battle of Kursk. On 24 May 1943, the party Central Committee approved a resolution, "On Reorganization of the Structure of the Party and Komsomol Organizations in the Red Army and Strengthening the Role of Front, Army and Division Newspapers," and the USSR GKO [State Defense Committee] approved a resolution abolishing the institution of deputy company and battery commanders for political affairs. As a result, more than 400,000 party and

komsomol activists were promoted to party and komsomol leadership work, and more than 130,000 political workers were shifted to command work.⁷

Strengthening the party organizations contributed to intensifying the ideological and political influence on the personnel. In battalion and equivalent level subunits of the Voronezh, Central, Bryansk and Western fronts alone, 6,096 new primary party organizations were created, which did a great deal to enhance the effectiveness of work among the soldiers. In June the party organizations of the Central and Voronezh fronts took 23,000 men into their ranks. By the start of the clash on the Kursk Salient, each rifle company and artillery battery had 10-12 or more communists and 15-20 komsomol members. Almost 40 percent of the personnel in the forces were party or komsomol members. Many tank and mechanized brigades counted 300-500 or more party members and candidate members. Overall, there were more than 1 million communists and komsomol members in five fronts (Central, Voronezh, Bryansk, Western, and Steppe).⁸ They determined the heroic frame of mind of the men in the units and subunits in the defense and offense, and through their fervent party word and personal example of staunchness, bravery and courage, carried along the soldiers to great feats. Thus, on 11 July enemy tanks rushed toward the positions of the 3d Bn, 26th Guards Airborne Regt. Communist Sr Sgt P. K. Vorobyev, having run to meet them, lay in an open position and knocked out two Tigers from his antitank rifle. Being wounded, he took an antitank grenade and with the exclamation, "For my party!" threw himself under a tank. The communist's feat inspired the soldiers in the battalion and mobilized them to fulfill successfully their assigned mission.

Communist Sgt Vanakhun Manzus (232d Mortar Regt), having reported himself surrounded by enemy, struck a mortar round against the mortar base-plate. He perished, having killed several Hitlerites. For this feat V. Manzus earned the title Hero of the Soviet Union.

The reorganization of party and komsomol organizations concluded by the end of June 1943 helped strengthen their link with the mass of soldiers, and enliven mass agitation work. Not only assigned political workers, but also commanders, as well as rank and file communists and komsomol members were involved in this. A large detachment of agitators in the platoons and companies was created in each division. "As it went into battle," reported Col V. V. Petrov, chief of the political department, 6th Guards Rfl Div, to the army political department, "the division had 638 agitators, including 330 communists, capable not only by word, but also by personal example, to inspire the soldiers and commanders to selfless struggle against the enemy."⁹ Subsequently, the men of the large units, repulsing mass attacks by enemy tanks and infantry, displayed high staunchness and mass heroism. In the defensive battles

at Kursk the division destroyed 244 tanks and much other equipment. Enemy killed and wounded constituted 7,860 men. The large unit was awarded the Order of the Red Banner.¹⁰

Unremitting attention was paid to implementation of measures outlined by the 24 May 1943 Party Central Committee resolution for strengthening the role of the frontline press in upbringing of the personnel. By the beginning of the Battle of Kursk the number and quality of periodicals had increased. In 1943 more than 150 new newspapers were created. The single issue circulation of daily army publications in July 1943 was 1,624,000 issues.¹¹ The political organs monitored the timely delivery of newspapers, demanded that the press be used actively in educating the soldiers, and constantly assisted commanders and political workers in this.

One of the special features of party political work stems from the fact that on both sides a tremendous quantity of weapons and equipment were brought in to the Battle of Kursk: 69,000 guns and mortars, 13,200 tanks and self-propelled guns, and more than 11,000 combat aircraft.¹² Soviet forces received aircraft of new types, and better systems of rocket artillery, small arms and other weapons. All this required great efforts to mobilize the personnel to master the military equipment and weapons they were getting, and the techniques of combating enemy tanks. It was constantly explained to the soldiers that a hero is first of all a master of military affairs. Party and komsomol organizations struggled persistently to see that communists and komsomol members set personal examples in military training. In the preparatory period these questions were discussed at party and komsomol meetings, and buro sessions, at which specific measures to improve the military skill of the soldiers were outlined.

Mass circulation leaflets told about how to defeat enemy equipment, and popularized the soldiers who had knocked out Tigers. Special instructions from front and army military soviets were explained to the men, and gatherings of men who had destroyed tanks and meetings of the combat aktiv were held. For the purpose of eliminating "tank fear," training in which tanks rolled over infantry in foxholes and trenches was organized, and the results of artillery firing against captured military equipment were demonstrated. For example, demonstration firings from antitank guns against captured fascist tanks were held in the 5th Guards Tank and 6th Guards armies. Special groups of photographers were created in some large units, who, after the firings, prepared photographs indicating vulnerable places of enemy vehicles. The photographs were disseminated to the agitators. It was explained to the men that a fascist tank can be destroyed by any antitank weapon, if it is ably operated.

Not only moral, but also material incentives were used to mobilize the soldiers to destroy the military equipment of the invaders. On 24 May 1943 was published the

NKO Order, "On Incentives For Soldiers and Commanders For Combat Work of Destroying Enemy Tanks." It established monetary bonuses for each tank knocked out or destroyed. The rights granted were ably used in many large units and units. For example, in the 307th Rfl Div, 13th Army, on 7 July soldiers were given monetary bonuses, and then talks were held with the men on, "To Actively Destroy Fascist Tanks," "The Antitank Grenade and Antitank Rifle—Reliable Means of Destroying Fascist Tanks," etc. This helped raise the combat activeness of the soldiers. The next day they destroyed 54 enemy tanks; i.e., 4.5 times more than on 7 July.¹³

During the course of the Battle of Kursk, in the defensive engagement alone approximately 3,000 fascist tanks were knocked out or burned, of which artillerymen destroyed 1,900. Tankers and infantrymen wrote off numerous enemy vehicles themselves. Thus, in 12 days of July the 1st Guards Tank Bde destroyed 100 fascist tanks, including 35 Tigers, and the riflemen of Sr Sgt Kh. M. Mukhamadiyev's platoon (70th Guards Rfl Div) knocked out 27 tanks in 4 days.¹⁴

Propaganda concerning soldiers who had distinguished themselves in the battles was of tremendous upbringing and mobilizing importance. Heroes were popularized in the press and through oral agitation. Commanders began to make more active use of the right to award the men orders and medals. New forms of popularizing feats also appeared during the battle. They were associated, in particular, with the practice of salutes in honor of prominent victories of the Soviet Army. As is known, the first such salute was carried out on 5 August 1943 after the liberation of the cities of Orel and Belgorod. Meetings, assemblies and discussions were devoted to this event.

Active mass agitation work was carried out in connection with orders of the supreme commander-in-chief, which expressed gratitude to the forces. As a rule, the text of the expression of gratitude was given to each soldier in a large unit that distinguished itself in the battles. Numerous useful measures were organized on the occasion of awarding guards banners to the forces.

During the Battle of Kursk commanders and political workers did much to bring new replacements into the units from among local residents who had lived a long time on occupied territory. For example, in spring 1943 more than 60 percent of the inductees into Voronezh Front units and large units were such people. Talks were held with them on the combat traditions of the Soviet Army, and the mass heroism displayed in the struggle against the German Fascist invaders. The most experienced commanders and political workers were sent to the reserve regiments where their training was conducted. Heroes of past battles and the best specialists spoke to the new troops. Agitators explained the military and political situation and discussed the combat path of the units and large units.¹⁵

Meetings held jointly with the population of liberated cities and towns, which were widely practiced in the period of the counteroffensive by our forces at Kursk, had a strong educational effect on the men.

MSU I. S. Konev, former Steppe Front commander, called the Battle of Kursk an epic of staunchness, courage, and heroism, which occasioned the amazement and admiration of contemporaries. Emphasizing its historic importance, he noted that it "will be preserved forever in the memory as a symbol of the invincibility of our great socialist homeland."¹⁶

The experience of party political work in the Battle of Kursk teaches commanders and political workers the ability to influence the personnel effectively in a complex combat environment, to display creativeness and initiative, and help seek out ways to improve the effectiveness of educating Soviet soldiers under modern conditions.

Footnotes

1. M. S. Gorbachev "Izbrannyye rechi i stati" [Selected Speeches and Articles], Vol 1, Moscow, Politizdat, 1987, p 431.
2. "Istoriya vtoroy mirovoy voyny" [History of World War II], Vol 7, Moscow, Voenizdat, 1976, p 185.
3. M. S. Gorbachev, "Ukazatel sochineniy" [Index of Works], p 431.
4. "Istoriya vtoroy...," Vol 7, p 185.
5. "Soobshcheniya Sovetskogo informburo" [Reports of the Soviet Information Bureau], Vol 5, Moscow, Sovetskoye informburo, 1944, p 219.
6. K. K. Shilov, "Rechitskaya Krasnoznamennaya" [Rechitsa Red Banner], Moscow, Voenizdat, 1984, p 76.
7. "Ideologicheskaya rabota KPSS na fronte (1941-1945 gg)" [Ideological Work of the CPSU at the Front (1941-1945)], Moscow, Voenizdat, 1960, pp 146-148.
8. "Kurskaya bitva" [The Battle of Kursk], Moscow, Nauka, 1970, p 360.
9. "TsAMO SSSR" [USSR Central Ministry of Defense Archives], Folio 427, Work 11125, File 4, p 82.
10. Ibid., pp 84, 89.
11. "Kurskaya bitva," p 353.
12. Ibid., p 5.
13. "TsAMO," Folio 299, Work 3063, File 13, p 126.

14. "V plameni srazheniy" [In the Flames of Battles], Moscow, Voenizdat, 1973, p 126.

15. "Ideologicheskaya rabota KPSS na fronte (1941-1945 gg)" [Ideological Work of the CPSU at the Front (1941-1945)], Moscow, Voenizdat, 1960, p 144.

16. "Kurskaya bitva," p 39.

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Military Operations [Deystviya] in the Northwestern Sector in the Initial Period of the War

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[Article by Col B. N. Petrov, candidate of historical sciences: "Military Operations [Deystviya] in the Northwestern Sector in the Initial Period of the War"]

[Text] The problems associated with the start of the Great Patriotic War are complex and diverse. Especially topical, in our view, are questions about the entry of the armed forces into the war and the conduct of the first operations [operatsii]. It is known that in the initial period Soviet forces waged large defensive operations [operatsiya] on each of the strategic sectors. However, in military historical works until recently these operations [operatsii] were not differentiated in the overall system of border engagements and examined separately. This article analyzes the defensive operations [operatsiya] of Soviet forces on the Northwest sector.

From the first day of combat operations [deystviya] this sector became an arena of intense fierce engagements of large groupings of the armed forces of both sides. Here Hitler's command attempted to achieve rapidly its planned military-political goals, including seizing the Baltic region and Leningrad with the bases and ships of the Red Banner Baltic Fleet, occupying most important areas in the Soviet polar region, and creating advantageous strategic conditions for coordination with the grouping of forces directed at the central areas of our country.

The Barbarossa plan anticipated specifically that, after our front in Belorussia was split by the German Fascist grouping advancing from the area of Warsaw, there would be created the "prerequisites for turning powerful units of mobile forces to the north, in order, in coordination with the northern group of armies attacking from Eastern Prussia in the general direction of Leningrad, to destroy the enemy forces operating in the Baltic region. Only after fulfilling this urgent task, after which the seizing of Leningrad and Kronstadt must follow, should the operations [operatsii] to seize Moscow begin..."

In order to make a sudden strike against forces in the zone of the Baltic Special Military District, the Wehrmacht command concentrated large forces in East Prussia, which had long been the outpost of German militarism. Here Army Group North (18th and 16th field armies and 4th Tank Group) was deployed on a front extending 230 km (from the Baltic Sea to Goldap). The 1st Air Force supported its actions. The 3d Tank Group and part of the forces of the 9th Army, which were included in Army Group Center, were concentrated to the south, from Goldap to Suwalki on a 70 km front.²

The German Fascist grouping numbered a total of 41 divisions, including seven tank and six motorized. The aggressor involved 655,000 men, 7,670 guns and mortars, 1,400 tanks and 1,070 aircraft for its offensive in the Baltic region. The average enemy operational [operativnyy] density was 7-8 km per division; that of the Soviet forces was approximately 50 km, and that only for first line divisions.

Along the border of the Soviet Union with Norway and in the northern part of Finland, the separate Wehrmacht Norway Army was stationed. It received the mission to seize Murmansk and the Kirov railroad north of Belomorsk.

The Karelian and Southeastern Finnish armies were concentrated in the southeastern part of Finland. The Karelian Army was to seize the southern areas of Karelia and link up with forces of Army Group North on the Svir River. The Southeastern Army was assigned the mission of seizing the Karelian Isthmus, linking up with German forces in the Leningrad area, and occupying Hanko Naval Base.

Twenty one enemy divisions and three brigades were deployed in the northern sector. They contained 325,000 men, approximately 3,200 guns and mortars, and 900 aircraft.³

The forces of the Baltic Special Military District (Col Gen F. I. Kuznetsov, commander) and the Leningrad Military District (Lt Gen M. M. Popov, commander) were to prevent the aggressor incursion from East Prussia and Finland and ensure completion of mobilization and concentration of appropriate forces on the Northwest Sector.

The Red Banner Baltic Fleet (Vice Adm V. F. Tributs, commander) was ordered to prevent the penetration of Fascist ships into the gulfs of Finland and Riga, and the landing of assaults.

The Baltic Special Military District (from 22 June the Northwestern Front) assigned two armies, the 8th (Maj Gen P. P. Sobennikov, commander), and the 11th (Lt Gen V. I. Morozov, commander) to cover the land border on a 300 km front.

The 12th and 3d mechanized corps (Maj Gen N. M. Shestopalov, and Maj Gen Tank Troops A. V. Kurkin, commanders) constituted the second echelons of the covering armies. They were required to make counter-strikes in the case of an aggressor breakthrough, destroy him, and restore the situation.

The 27th Army (Maj Gen N. E. Berzarin, commander) was in the depth of the district territory. Its headquarters was located in Riga. The 67th and 16th rifle divisions, and 3d Separate Rfl Bde were assigned to protect the sea coast, jointly with forces of the naval bases.

By 22 June 1941 there were 25 divisions in the district, including four tank and two motorized (see table 1). The rifle large units were equipped according to peacetime tables,⁴ and the tank and motorized large units had not completed organization.

Table 1: Composition of the Northwestern Front on 22 June 1941

Armies	Rifle Large Units	Tank Large Units
8th	10th Rfl Corps (10th, 90th Rfl Divs); 11th Rfl Corps (48th, 125th Rfl Divs); 11th Rfl Div	12th Mech Corps (23d, 28th tank divs; 202d Mech Div)
11th	16th Rfl Corps (5th, 33d, 188th rfl divs); 29th Rfl Corps (179th, 184th rfl divs); 23d, 126th, 128th rfl divs	3d Mech Corps (2.5 tank divs; 84th Mech Div)
27th	22d Rfl Corps (180th, 182d rfl divs); 24th Rfl Corps (181th, 183d rfl divs); 16th, 67th rfl divs; 3d Rfl Bde;	—
Total: 3 armies	6 rfl corps; 19 rfl divs; 1 rfl bde	2 Mech Corps; 4 tank divs; 2 mech divs

The Leningrad Military District (from 24 June the Northern Front) contained three armies: the 14th (Lt Gen V. A. Frolov, commander) on the Murmansk and Kandalaksha sectors the 7th (Lt Gen F. D. Gorelenko, commander) on the Petrozavodsk Sector, and the 23d (Lt Gen P. S. Pshennikov, commander). The latter covered Leningrad from the north and west. Twenty-one divisions entered the district, including four tank and two motorized. The large units that directly occupied the border areas were manned and equipped according to wartime tables.

With the start of the war the main events on the Northwest Sector developed in the Baltic region (see diagram). In the northern sector the enemy shifted to the offensive at the end of June.

The correlation of forces and resources on 22 June in the Northwestern Front zone is shown in table 2. It should be noted that the German Fascist grouping was superior to the forces of this front in personnel and artillery, and that approximate equality was preserved in tanks and aircraft. However, it is necessary to remember that the

fronts contained a total of 109 new type tanks (T-34, KV). The bulk (1,284) were the BT-7 and T-26 light tanks, which had taken part in the Soviet-Finnish War, and had little engine life left and worn out tracks and suspensions.

Forces and Resources	Northwestern Front	Enemy (18th Army, 16th Army, 4th, 3d Tank Gps)	Correlation
Personnel	348	655	1:1.8
Guns and mortars (less 50 mm)	5,573	7,673	1:1.4
Tanks (all types)	1,393	1,389	1:1
Aircraft (Combat)	1,210	1,070	1:1.1

The enemy grouping concentrated in East Prussia numbered only 430 light tanks, and the main strike forces consisted of 749 T-3 medium tanks modernized in 1940, and 200 tanks of the then new T-4 type.

Analysis of the status of the opposing grouping shows that the enemy had an almost 2:1 superiority in personnel, and 1.5:1 in artillery. The qualitative advantage in the bulk of the tanks and aircraft was also on the side of the German Fascist forces. Moreover, the Hitlerites had two years of combat experience. Through decisive massing of forces and resources on strike axes, the enemy formed compact strike groupings, which enjoyed 5:1 superiority over the large units of the covering armies on the Shyaulay Axis, and 8:1 superiority on the Vilnius Axis.

No clearly expressed defensive grouping was created in the Northwestern Front. Its command erroneously assumed that the border engagement would be waged with only part of the forces (8th and 11th covering armies). Therefore, by 22 June, out of all the front forces, only six rifle divisions of the first echelon of the indicated armies and the mechanized corps, which were concentrated in individual divisions on a number of axes across a front of more than 200 km, were being brought to combat readiness. Large units of the 8th Army, which were occupying defensive zones in accordance with the cover plan, were in the best condition. But even they had not completely organized a system of fire and coordination.

The rifle divisions that were not part of the rifle corps (23d, 126th and 11th), and were designated as reserves of either the front or the covering armies, were moving toward the border.⁵ Six divisions of three territorial corps (22d Estonian, 24th Latvian, and 29th Lithuanian) remained in camps or in their places of permanent stationing.

The grouping of Northwestern Front forces that had taken shape by the start of the war did not provide for repulsing massive aggressor strikes. The first echelon rifle divisions of the covering armies, dispersed across a

wide front, could not resist long. The reserves being moved up from the depth were not able to support them, since they arrived 3-5 days late in their designated areas. Taking the existing conditions into account, it was not advisable to drag the reserves up to the state border, and, in our view, they should have been concentrated on the Neman and Zapadnaya Dvina river lines.

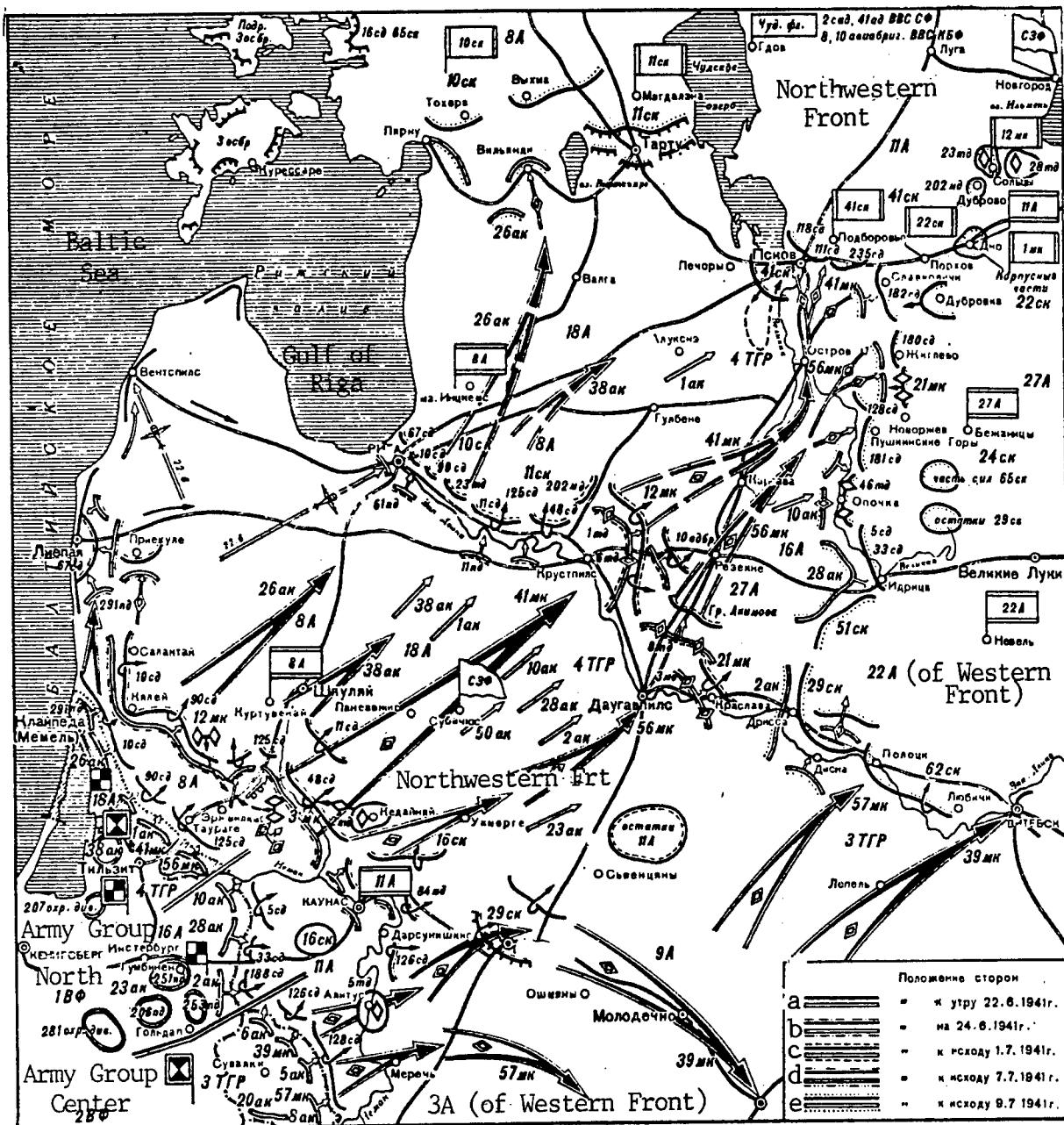
The opposing sides began combat actions [deystviya] in the northern sector on 29 June. Consequently, the deployment of Northern Front forces took place basically in the time periods provided for by the cover plan.

Military actions in the Baltic Region began at dawn on 22 June with a strong artillery shelling. Simultaneously, Hitler's aviation bombed communication centers, 11 air fields, ports, and large railroad stations.

The strike by a tremendous force already on the first day of the war split the Soviet front. By 1200 hours the enemy 4th Tank Group had knocked a hole in the defense at the juncture of the 8th and 11th armies. The enemy achieved his greatest success in the 11th Army zone, where the 3d Tank Group split our combat formation. The forward units of this tank group crossed the Neman River south of Kaunas, having advanced 60 km that day. Large units of the 11th Army, having lost communications with their headquarters, were forced to withdraw with losses hastily and in disorganization to Kaunas and Vilnius.

In this situation the Northwestern Front command and staff did not have a complete impression about the status of their forces and the axis of the enemy strike, and could not influence the development of events in a timely and effective way.

"There were no signs of purposeful and planned control of enemy forces as a whole," state the documentary reports of the 3d Tank Group, "and resistance was rendered by individual enemy groups disconnected from one another. Many fortifications had inadequate garrisons or were lacking them entirely."



LEGEND: Positions of the sides: a -- by morning, 22 Jun 41; b -- on 24 Jun 41; c -- by day's end 1 Jul 41; d -- by day's end 7 Jul 41; e -- by day's end 9 Jul 41

[NOTE: A = army; TA = tank army; mk = tank corps; ck = rifle corps; ak = artillery corps; cd = rifle division]

Course of Combat Operations in the Baltic Region (22 June - 9 July 1941)

"In those places where the enemy was encountered, he resisted fiercely and bravely, and stood to the death."⁶

Trying to restore the lost position on the state border, at 0945 hours 22 June the front commander issued an order to the 12th and 3d mechanized corps to make counterstrikes against the fascist Tilsit Grouping, which had broken through in the 8th Army zone. However, it seems to us that the situation required that a strike be made in first priority against the most dangerous enemy grouping, which was advancing unimpeded toward Vilnius. The 3d Mech Corps, and 12th and 126th rifle divisions, as well as the 23d Rfl Div approaching the area of combat operations [deystviya] from the depth, should have been involved. Unfortunately, this was not done and the aggressor was able to develop the offensive against the Lithuanian capital.

On the evening of 22 June in the Northwestern Front, of the forces located in the border zone there remained 10 divisions not committed to battle: in the 8th Army zone were the 12th Mech Corps and the 11th Rfl Div, which was off-loading in the Shyaulyay area; in the 11th Army zone were the 3d Mech Corps (minus the 5th Tank Div) and four rifle divisions.⁷

Analyzing the results of the first day of combat operations [deystviya], it should be noted that the commanders of the armies and fronts and their staffs, as a result of the systematic disruption of communications, found themselves unable to assess the situation correctly, or quickly make the necessary decisions and organize control.

Large units and units moving up from the depth were committed to battle from the line of march, without an adequate amount of artillery and ammunition or air cover. The enemy detected the columns from the air as they approached the battlefield, and the enemy air forces made powerful strikes against them. Thus, on the morning of 22 June the 48th Rfl Div, which was being sent in march formation to the state border to reinforce the defense on the Shyaulyay sector, was subjected to strong bombing. It did not have air defense weapons, and the men did not have ammunition on them, since the large unit was oriented toward conducting exercises. In the afternoon of 22 June in the area of Erzhvilkas it was suddenly attacked by tanks that had broken through from Taurage. As a result the division lost 70 percent of its composition.⁸

Thus, the rifle units that were committed to battle piecemeal could not significantly delay the advance of the German Fascist tank groupings or cause them substantial damage.

On 23 June the enemy continued to develop the offensive. The 8th and 11th covering armies suffered heavy losses and were withdrawing on divergent axes. A gap up to 130 km wide formed at the junction of the Northwestern and Western fronts, which nothing was available to close.

The counterstrike by the 12th and 3d mechanized corps, carried out on 23-24 June, as a result of poor organization and support amounted to hasty actions uncoordinated in place and time. Its results were insignificant, and the tank losses were high. In the 12th Mech Corps they amounted to up to 80 percent of materiel by 29 June.⁹

Northwestern Front VVS [Air Forces] lost 921 aircraft in the first three days of the war.¹⁰

The consequences for front forces of the first enemy strikes were extremely grave. Already on 23 June enemy tank units had enveloped the 11th Army, which was covering Kaunas and Vilnius, from the north and south. The covering armies began a disorderly withdrawal. Along with them were moving up to 60,000 unarmed construction workers, as well as refugees of the border zone,¹¹ which exacerbated the general difficulties. Air assaults and sabotage groups disrupted the activity of the rear and knocked out wire communications.

The system of control was in disarray. On 24 June front headquarters succeeded in preserving wire communications only with Moscow and the 8th Army. Interruptions arose in the operation of radio communications, due to interference created by the enemy. Transport of ammunition and fuel ceased almost entirely.

The situation dictated that decisive measures be taken by the commands of the front and armies to eliminate the enemy breakthrough. However, not having reserves and having lost control it was not possible to restore the situation and prevent the withdrawal of the 8th and 11th armies.

Overall, front forces did not accomplish their main mission of detaining the enemy in the border zone and securing the deployment of the main forces. Attempts to eliminate the deep penetrations by enemy tanks on the most important axes were also unsuccessful.

On 25 June the front commander received a directive from the Supreme High Command Stavka, which demanded that he organize the defense with forces of the withdrawing formations, reserves, and second echelon large units, along the Zapadnaya Dvina. The 21st Mech Corps (Maj Gen D. D. Lelyushenko, commander) moved from Stavka reserve toward this line. However, it did not succeed in occupying the defense in a timely manner, since on 26 June large enemy forces crossed the river in the area of Dvinsk. The 27th Army (front second echelon) also was not able to move out and organize the defense on the water line. On 26 June the Wehrmacht 56th Mtzd Corps attacked its large units.

The withdrawing Soviet forces found themselves in a difficult situation. The 3d Mech Corps was surrounded. The 12th Mech Corps (Col V. Ya. Grinberg, commander

from 1 July 1941) was waging combat operations [deystviya] jointly with units of the 8th Army. The front commander did not have information about it, and believed that the corps was also surrounded.

The poorly controlled large units of the 11th Army were fighting their way through toward Polotsk. By this time the army had lost up to 75 percent of its military equipment and approximately 60 percent of its personnel.¹² There were no communications with it. Its location became known only by evening on 30 June. Army Gen G. K. Zhukov, chief of the General Staff, telegraphed the Northwestern Front commander: "The 11th Army, Northwestern Front, which is withdrawing from the Kaunas area, has been found in the area of Dovgilishka Station, Koltyniana, and the woods west of Sventsyan. The army does not have fuel, rounds, rations or forage. The army does not know the situation or what it is to do."

"The Supreme Command Headquarters has ordered that the removal of this army from the area of Sventsyan to the area north of Disna be organized immediately under your personal responsibility..."¹³

In order to restore the front it was important to hold the defensive line along the right bank of the Zapadnaya Dvina. However, it was unable to hold back the onslaught of strong enemy mobile groupings here. On 26 June the enemy crossed the Zapadnaya Dvina at Daugavpils from the line of march, on 29 June at Yekabpils, and on 30 June at Riga.

Anticipating the possibility of such a breakthrough, on 29 June the Stavka ordered the Northwestern Front commander, simultaneously with organizing the defense along this line, to prepare and occupy a line along the Velikaya River, in so doing relying on previously created fortified areas in Pskov and Ostrov. A number of large units (41st Rfl Corps, 235th Rfl Div, 1st Tank Corps) were arriving from Headquarters Reserve and the Northern Front to reinforce on this sector.

On 30 June Col Gen F. I. Kuznetsov¹⁴ issued an order to the forces defending the right bank of the Zapadnaya Dvina to withdraw to the Pskov, Ostrov and Sebezh fortified areas. During the withdrawal, the front commander rescinded all previously issued orders, and demanded a shift to the offensive on the morning of 2 July to restore the defense. The quick and unexpected change of decisions, without taking into account the time available for their implementation, led to a situation in which on 2 July the forces were in movement, unprepared for any action. The enemy exploited this, and that same morning made a strike in the gap between the 8th and 27th armies. In connection with the threat he would break through in the area of Ostrov and Pskov, and in order to create a deeply echeloned defense on the distant approaches to Leningrad, on 4 July the Stavka ordered some of the forces of the Northern Front drawn in for defense of the city. They were combined into the Luga

Operations Group, under the command of Lt Gen K. P. Pyadyshev. By 10 July four rifle divisions, three people's militia divisions, the Leningrad Infantry School and a separate mountain rifle brigade had moved out to the Luga defense line, which ran along the Luga River from the Gulf of Finland to Lake Ilmen.¹⁵

The combat operations [deystviya] on the line of fortified areas along the Velikaya River also did not have the expected results. The withdrawing large units, late in moving to the areas designated for them, did not succeed in preparing defensive positions. The fortified areas had been dismantled in connection with the construction with new ones along the state border. The reserves of the Supreme Command also held back. Enemy mobile groupings overtook them, exploiting gaps between the withdrawing forces. On 6 July forward units of the Fascist 4th Tank Group seized Ostrov, and on 9 July Pskov. Breakthrough of large units of Army Group North toward Leningrad was threatened.

In the north combat operations [deystviya] began on 29 June with the shift to the offensive of the left flank large units of Hitler's Norway Army on the Murmansk sector, and on the 30th that of Finnish forces on the Ukhta sector. On 1 July the enemy made a strike from the area of Kuolayarva to Kandalaksha.

As a result of stubborn battles the 14th Army withdrew in individual sectors 20-30 km from the border, and by mid-July 1941 stopped the enemy on all axes. Subsequently, combat actions here were local in nature and had no important influence on the strategic situation that was taking shape on the Soviet-German Front.

Thus, the defensive operation [operatsiya] by the Northwestern Front in the Baltic region ended in failure. In the first 18 days of the war Soviet forces withdrew to a depth of up to 450 km. Almost all of the Baltic region was occupied. The front command failed to create a defensive grouping capable of repulsing the aggressor's strike. While the Wehrmacht leadership concentrated strong, compact strike groupings on the main axes, large units of the front were scattered in a wide zone to great depth, and had low operational [operativnye] densities.

Combat actions [deystviya] in the operation [operatsiya] were distinguished by high dynamism, rapid and abrupt changes in the situation, and the lack of a continuous front line. The counterstrike by forces of two mechanized corps and reserves approaching the battlefield did not have the desired results.

Unsteady control of the forces by the front command, and its errors in assessing the situation and decision making played a significant role in the unsuccessful outcome of the defensive operation [operatsiya] in the Baltic. The orientation on wire communications did not justify itself. Permanent communication lines were knocked out following the first strikes by enemy aviation and actions by his sabotage groups. The limited number

of radio stations and lack of necessary skills on the part of command personnel in employing radios did not allow uninterrupted radio communications to be organized. Due to late or distorted information, the decisions being made by the front and army commanders often did not correspond to the situation that was taking shape.

Such natural lines as major rivers and inter-lake defiles were not used sufficiently in organizing the defense. Therefore, front forces were unable to consolidate on the Neman, Zapadnaya Dvina, and Velikaya rivers. The defense here was of a center-of-resistance type, and was characterized by linear disposition of large units, large gaps and open flanks in the operational [operativnyy] structure, and weak engineer preparation of the terrain with a lack of anti-tank resources. Despite the staunchness and stubbornness of the men, the defenders were unable to repulse the massive strikes by superior enemy tank, motorized infantry and air forces. The transition of the armies and divisions to occupying intermediate lines was implemented under conditions of a withdrawal under constant enemy influence, with a lack of time to prepare for combat actions [deystviya].

During the defense the most difficult mission was holding the tactical zone. The German Fascist forces, possessing superiority in forces and resources on selected axes, relatively quickly overcame the resistance of our large units and formations. After the enemy had broken through the tactical zone the operational [operativnyy] stability of the defense was disrupted, and open flanks and gaps between large units and formations formed. Under these conditions we were forced to withdraw. Actions of this sort were combined with consecutive resistance on a number of lines, and a struggle to escape the threat of encirclement. At the same time, the continuous withdrawal in the first weeks of the war demoralized the men and caused fear of encirclement. Not sensing close contact with their neighbors, some units left their positions and withdrew, even if the enemy was attacking with equal or smaller forces.

The situation required that commanders and staffs at all levels sharply improve control of the forces, the ability to maneuver quickly with existing resources, the conduct of active reconnaissance of the enemy, able economy of forces and simultaneous exhausting of the enemy and inflicting upon him the greatest possible number of losses. Commanders acquired combat experience at a high price in difficult battles. Col I. D. Chernyakhovskiy underwent a harsh test of his maturity on the battlefields in the Baltic region, and became one of the talented military leaders of the Great Patriotic War. Units of the 28th Tank Div under his command not only stopped the enemy in the Kaltinenay area by counterattacking, but even wedged five kilometers into his combat formations, destroying 14 tanks, 20 guns, and up to a battalion of infantry. Southwest of Shyaulyay they heroically held back a fierce enemy onslaught and secured the withdrawal of the 8th Army to the Zapadnaya Dvina line.

The difficult conditions that took shape on the Northwest Sector did not allow the deployment of the army and front rear. The forces had to defend without rear services, which, as they were organized already in the course of combat operations [deystviya], arrived very late in the fronts, armies and divisions. The location of many depots remained unknown to the units and large units. Due to the lack of an organized rear, the latter experienced a sharp shortage of ammunition and fuel. At the beginning of July 1941 the quantity of ammunition did not exceed 0.6-0.8 units of fire in the Northwestern Front forces.

The defensive operation [operatsiya] in the Baltic region was conducted with participation of the Red Banner Baltic Fleet, which operated in an environment of enemy air superiority and a continuously increasing mine danger. Its main mission at the start of the war was defense of naval bases and coastal areas, which were threatened by seizure from land.

After the arrival of strategic reserves and occupation of the Luga defensive line, the actions of the forces on the Northwest Sector grew into the Leningrad Strategic Defensive Operation [deystviye] starting on 10 July. During this operation a turning point in the conduct of defensive actions on this important strategic sector was gradually noted.

Footnotes

1. "Sovershenno sekretno! Tolko dlya komandovaniya!" [Top Secret! Only for the command!], Moscow, Nauka, 1967, pp 151-152.
2. According to the Barbarossa plan, after breaking through the defense in the zone of the 11th Army, Northwestern Front, and reaching Vilnius, the 3d Tank Group was to turn toward Minsk, and in the future operate in the Western Front zone.
3. "Vazhneyshiye operatsii Velikoy Otechestvennoy voyny" [Most Important Operations of the Great Patriotic War], Moscow, Voenizdat, 1956, p 37.
4. On 1 June 1941 the average manning strength of divisions in the Baltic Special Military District was 8,710 men; the numerical strength of infantry divisions of the German Fascist forces had been brought to wartime tables (16,850 men).
5. The order for their movement was issued on 18 June 1941 ("TsAMO" [Central Ministry of Defense Archives], USSR, Folio 140, Work 680086, File 14, pp 6, 75, 94).
6. "TsAMO," Folio 500, Work 12478, File 231, pp 5-6.
7. "Istoriya Pribaltiyskogo voyennogo okruga" [History of the Baltic Military District], Riga, 1968, p 94.

8. "TsAMO," Folio 1154, Work 1, File 2, p 3.
9. Ibid., Folio 344, Work 5554, File 71, p 113.
10. Ibid., Folio 35, Work 107559, File 6, p 8.
11. Ibid., Folio 221, Work 1351, File 200, p 7.
12. Ibid., p 17.
13. Ibid., Folio 8, Work 930688, File 41, pp 152-153.
14. On 30 June Maj Gen P. P. Sobennikov was named front commander, however F. I. Kuznetsov continued to command front forces until 4 July.
15. "Istoriya Velikoy Otechestvennoy voyny Sovetskogo Soyuza 1941-1945" [History of the Great Patriotic War of the Soviet Union 1941-1945], Vol 2, Moscow, Voenizdat, 1963, p 80.

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Restoration of the Broken Strategic Defensive Front in 1941

00010037h Moscow VOYENNO-ISTORICHESKIY ZHURNAL in Russian No 7, Jul 88 (Signed to press 24 Jun 88) pp 52-60

[Article by Maj Gen P.T. Kunitskiy: "Restoration of the Broken Strategic Defensive Front in 1941"]

[Text] The main content of the operations [deystviy] by the Soviet Armed Forces in the initial period of the war and subsequent months until December 1941 was strategic defense. During this time the enemy succeeded three times in breaking through our strategic front to a depth of 300-500 km (in June on the Northwestern and Western axes, in September on the Southwestern Axis, and in October on the Western Axis), and three times we had to restore it.

Without going into a detailed description of the process of restoring the broken strategic defensive front on each of these axes, let us look briefly only at some factors that, in our view, were most important in solving this problem.

Of paramount importance were **mobilizing the efforts of the people and material resources, embodying in practice Lenin's postulates that "once matters have reached the state of war, everything must be subordinated to the interests of the war, all the internal life of the country must be subordinated to the war, and not the slightest wavering on this count is permissible."**¹

On 22 June 1941 the USSR Supreme Soviet Presidium issued an edict, "On Marshal Law," according to which in localities declared to be under marshal law all functions of the apparatus of state government in organizing the defense, maintaining public order and ensuring state

security were transferred to the military soviets of the fronts, districts and armies, and in places where they did not exist, to the large unit command. Local organs of state government, establishments and enterprises were obligated to render full assistance to the military command in the organization of the defense. The partisan movement was organized in the enemy rear.

The developed Communist Party program for turning the country into a single military camp was set forth in a 29 June 1941 directive from the USSR Soviet of People's Commissars and VKP(b) [All-Union Communist Party (of Bolsheviks)] Central Committee to party and soviet organizations of front line oblasts. The document explained the just nature of the war and the sacred duty of each individual to defend the homeland courageously and staunchly. The party Central Committee and Soviet Government demanded: "In merciless battle against the enemy, defend every inch of Soviet soil, fight to the last drop of blood for our cities and villages, and display the boldness, initiative and gumption characteristic of our people."² The all-round strengthening and reinforcement of the active army and transfer of the economy to a military footing was placed first and foremost. The directive was essentially the first military-political plan, on the basis of which began mobilization of all the country's forces to repulse the enemy.

The grave situation that had taken shape at the start of the war required that all power in the state be concentrated in the hands of an emergency organ. The State Defense Committee (GKO), organized on 30 June 1941 under the chairmanship of I. V. Stalin, became that organ.

Resolutions of the GKO had the force of wartime laws, and were mandatory for all party, Soviet and military organs. One of its most important functions was mobilizing human and material resources to enhance the military capabilities of the armed forces to repulse the aggression.

Deployment of the armed forces and restructuring the command and control systems were of great importance in restoring the disrupted strategic defensive front.

Mobilization was the immediate measure to be taken for strategic deployment of the armed forces. It was expressed in a significant increase in the numerical strength of the army and navy through the use of men with military obligations who were in the reserves, and the creation of new formations in accordance with the mobilization plan.

On 22 June 1941 the edict of the USSR Supreme Soviet Presidium on mobilization was announced. Mobilization began on 23 June in all military districts except the Central Asian, Transbaykal and Far Eastern. Men with military obligations born in the years 1905-1918 were called up (the contingent born in 1919-1922 was on active military service).

By 1 July (i.e., in the first eight days of the war) 5.3 million men were called up, as a result of the intense work of party and state organs. In August 1941, in connection with the need to replace combat losses, man newly organized large units and units, and create reserves, mobilization of reservists born in the years 1890-1904 and of draftees born in 1923 was carried out.

For the purpose of replenishing the active army with trained personnel, the GKO approved a resolution on reservist training (16 July 1941), and on universal mandatory military training of USSR citizens (17 September 1941).

The voluntary entry of Soviet people in the people's militia and fighter battalions played a major role in reinforcing the active army and navy. By fall 1941 there were approximately 60 people's militia divisions in the country, and approximately two million volunteers had joined the ranks of defenders of the homeland. During the war years there were approximately 400,000 people in the fighter battalions.

At the outset of the war, according to the mobilization plan, border military districts were transformed into fronts: the Baltic, Western and Kiev special military districts into the Northwestern (8th, 11th and 27th armies), Western (3d, 10th, 4th and 13th armies) and Southwestern (5th, 6th, 26th and 12th armies) fronts respectively; the Leningrad Military District into the Northern Front (14th, 7th and 23d armies). The 9th Army was deployed, based on the headquarters, large units and units of the Odessa Military District.

For strategic leadership of the armed conflict, on 23 June 1941 the Main Command Headquarters was created, consisting of S. K. Timoshenko (chairman), K. Ye. Voroshilov, V. M. Molotov, I. V. Stalin, G. K. Zhukov, S. M. Budennyy and N. G. Kuznetsov. On 10 July 1941 the Main Command Headquarters was transformed into the Supreme Command Headquarters. It was headed by I. V. Stalin, and B. M. Shaposhnikov was brought in. On 8 August 1941 I. V. Stalin was named supreme commander-in-chief. At this time the Headquarters began to be called the Supreme High Command (VGK) headquarters.

The VGK Headquarters carried out its activities under the leadership of the VKP(b) Central Committee Politburo and the GKO, which ensured Lenin's principle of unity of political and military leadership of the armed conflict. The most important measures to repulse the aggression and restore the broken strategic defensive front were discussed at joint sessions of the members of the Politburo, GKO and VGK Headquarters. In matters of strategic leadership the VGK Headquarters relied on the General Staff, which was subordinate to it.

In order to facilitate leadership of the military operations [deystiy] of the fronts by the VGK Headquarters, and improve the effectiveness of command and control, on

10 July 1941 the GKO approved a resolution to create three intermediate command and control organs—main commands of axes: Northwestern headed by MSU K. Ye. Voroshilov (Maj Gen M. V. Zakharov, chief of staff, and Maj Gen A. S. Tsvetkov from August 1941); Western under the leadership of MSU S. K. Timoshenko (Lt Gen G. K. Malandin, chief of staff, from 19 July MSU B. M. Shaposhnikov, and from 30 July Lt Gen V. D. Sokolovskiy); and the Southwestern led by MSU S. M. Budennyy and from September 1941 MSU S. K. Timoshenko (Maj Gen A. P. Pokrovskiy, and from October 1941 Maj Gen P. I. Bodin, chief of staff). Soon military soviets were established in the main commands, the members of which were A. A. Zhdanov (Northwestern Axis), N. A. Bulganin (Western Axis) and N. S. Khrushchev (Southwestern Axis).

In summer and fall 1941, to improve the system of strategic command and control, several NKO administrations were reorganized into main administrations. In July a special group of officers (with the rights of a department) was created in the General Staff for liaison with the active forces, on the basis of two per front, three per army, and two per division.³

For centralization of leadership of all mobilization organization work in the armed forces, in July 1941 the Main Administration of Organization and Manning of Soviet Army Forces (Glavupravform) was created in the NKO, headed by Army Commissar First Rank Ye. A. Shchadenko. It controlled and monitored the organization of combined arms large units and units (except for units and large units of armored forces, aviation and artillery).

In order to improve rear support of the forces in the active army, the Main Administration of the Rear created in July 1941 by decision of the GKO, and the position of Soviet Army Chief of the Rear was established, to which Lt Gen Intend Serv A. V. Khrulev was assigned. Corresponding administrations of the rear were created in the fronts and armies. Other changes in the central apparatus also took place, aimed at improving the leadership and all-round support of the armed forces.

Uncovering the axis of the main enemy strike, and pinning down his forces on other axes, contributed to a substantial degree to restoring the broken strategic defensive front.

At the start of the war, when the enemy developed a simultaneous offensive across the entire strategic front, it was very difficult to determine immediately the axis of his main strike. However, the Soviet command by and large successfully solved this task. Already in the course of the initial operations it was able to determine rather accurately that the main strike was being made on the Central (Smolensk-Moscow) Axis. By 10 July 1941, on the Western Axis, on an 800 km front, which constituted 16 percent of the total length of the Soviet-German

Front, Hitler's command concentrated 63.5 rated divisions (35 percent), 1,000 tanks (approximately 60 percent), 16,500 guns and mortars (approximately 40 percent), and 1,500 aircraft (37 percent).⁴

Having determined that the Western Axis was the decisive axis, where the enemy was rushing through Smolensk toward Moscow, the VGK Headquarters held it at the center of its attention throughout the entire Summer-Fall Defensive Campaign. Already on 25 June it ordered the regrouping of the 16th and 19th armies, which were concentrating southwest of Kiev, to the Smolensk Axis. Forces of the 20th, 24th and 28th armies, which were moving up from internal military districts, were sent there. Reinforcement of the Smolensk, and then the Moscow axes continued subsequently as well. Here defensive structures were built and engineer obstacles created at rapid tempos. In the final analysis, all of this led to a situation in which the enemy strike groupings encountered stubborn resistance from Soviet forces on many lines, suffered heavy losses, and were forced to make pauses in the offensive (the shift by Army Group Center to the defense at the end of July on a line east of Smolensk).

However, on the eve of the German-Fascist offensive on Moscow the Soviet command did not succeed in detecting their preparation in a timely manner and guessing the plan of Hitler's military leadership. As is known, the untimely determination of the main enemy strike in fall 1941, and the late decision about shifting the three fronts of the Western Axis (Western, Bryansk and Reserve fronts) to the defense, were the main causes of the unsuccessful start of the strategic defensive operation by Soviet forces on the approaches to Moscow.

In the interests of stabilizing the front line on the enemy main strike axis, the VGK Headquarters developed active operations [deystviy] away from this axis. Thus, in July-August stubborn defense in combination with counterattacks and counterstrikes on the approaches to Leningrad ruined the enemy plan to transfer the 4th Tank Group to the Western Axis, and thereby contributed to accomplishing the missions of the Smolensk engagement. In November, when heavy fighting was underway on the main, Moscow Strategic Axis, the VGK Headquarters, to pin down enemy forces on the flanks of the Soviet-German Front, ordered the forces operating in the area of Tikhvin and Rostov to shift to decisive offensive operations [deystviy]. As a result of the counteroffensives by Volkov Front formations at Tikhvin and Yuzhnyy near Rostov, the reserves of army groups North and South were pinned down and could not reinforce Army Group Center.

Operational-strategic defensive lines played a major role in restoring the strategic defensive front. They began to be created literally in the first days of the war, as soon as the Headquarters approved the decision about the shift of

the Soviet armed forces to the strategic defense, and were intended primarily to cover the most important axes, political centers, and military-economic and strategic objectives.

To stabilize the front in the northwest, already on 24 June it was decided to create the Luga defensive position on a line along the Luga River from the Gulf of Finland to Lake Ilmen. As a result of battles on the approaches to Luga, on the Luga Defensive Line, and especially the counterstrike by the 11th Army at Soltsy, made on 14-18 July, the further advance of the German-Fascist forces on Leningrad was stopped for almost a month, which contributed to strengthening the defense on the near approaches to the city. The overall depth of the defense on the Leningrad Axis was 100-120 km, and it was achieved, in addition to the Luga Defensive Line, by the creation of the Krasnogvardeysk Fortified Area, and defensive lines right on the outskirts of Leningrad.⁵

On the Western (Smolensk-Moscow) Axis, where the enemy was making his main strike, on 25 June the GKO decided to begin construction of a strategic defensive line, which was based on the Zapadnaya Dvina River from Polotsk to Vitebsk, and the Dnieper from Orsha to Loyev. It was 150-200 km away from the forces operating to the front, which made it possible to gain several days in order to occupy it with advancing reserves. On 29 June it was decided to build the Rzhevsk-Vyazma Defensive Line, and on 18 July the Mozhaysk Defensive Line (Lama River, Volokolamsk, Borodino, Ilinskoye, Detchino, Kaluga, Tula). In mid-July the depth of the strategic defense reached 250-300 km. Later, as the German Fascist forces advanced from the Dnieper to the east, it was built up by the creation of the Moscow Defense Zone, which included a security belt and two defensive lines: the main line (near Moscow along line Khlebnikovo, Skhodnya, Zvenigorod, Kubinka, Naro-Fominsk, Podolsk, Pakhra River), and the city line (along the outskirts of Moscow). On the Southwestern Axis, belts and lines were created to cover Kiev, Odessa, Sevastopol and the Donbass.

The existence of defensive structures prepared ahead of time in the rear, under conditions of the retreat of Soviet forces that had begun, was of great importance of stabilizing the front. Meanwhile, the large amount of planned engineer efforts, shortage of construction equipment and needed materials, as well as the lack of experience in erecting structures did not allow their preparation to be completed by the time required. Very often the enemy, possessing great superiority in forces and resources, high mobility, and air superiority, broke through to the rear defensive lines, which were not yet completely prepared and only partially occupied by Soviet troops. As a result, many of them did not play the role that had been allotted to them, while those that were fully ready justified their function. The defensive lines created on the direct approaches to Moscow, Leningrad, Odessa and Sevastopol can serve as examples of the latter.

Restoration of the disrupted strategic defensive front was achieved through the creation of large defensive groupings. For reasons that are known, at the start of the war there were no such groupings. It was necessary to create them while repulsing the German Fascist offensive, by regrouping of forces within fronts, transferring large units from neighboring fronts, and moving up strategic reserves from the depth of the country. Given the enemy air superiority, this led to a situation in which the Soviet large units and units even before reaching the planned area suffered heavy losses, and were forced to enter the battle separately. Combat operations [deystviy] often began from the line of march, on terrain that was unprepared or weakly prepared in an engineer respect. All of this reduced to a significant degree the combat effectiveness of the groupings and the stability of the strategic defense as a whole. Thus, at the beginning of July on the Western (Smolensk) Axis, the strategic defensive grouping began to deploy on the Dnieper line while forward tank large units of Army Group Center were already approaching it. The Headquarters was forced to commit five combined arms armies (16th, 19th, 20th, 21st and 22d), which were being moved up from the reserves, as separate large units, and sometimes even regiments, as the troop trains arrived.⁶ Very little time was allotted to organizing the system of fire, preparing and completing the preparation of defensive lines, and organizing command and control and coordination. All of this led to a situation in which, despite the substantial reinforcement of the Western Axis with reserves, only by the end of July 1941 did the Soviet command succeed in stopping the advance of the German Fascist forces, and forcing them to shift to the defense as a result of the Smolensk battle.

By the end of September 1941; i.e., just before the start of the enemy offensive against Moscow, a rather large grouping of Soviet forces was created on the Western Axis. Approximately 1,250,000 men, 7,600 guns and mortars, 990 tanks, and 677 aircraft were numbered in the Western, Bryansk and Reserve fronts. The German Fascist forces were superior to them in personnel 1.4:1, artillery 1.8:1, tanks 1.7:1, and aircraft 2:1.⁷

A unique situation that took place by the moment that Army Group Center shifted to the offense was the fact that these fronts themselves throughout August-September were waging active offensive operations [deystviy], and only on 27 September; i.e., three days before the start of the Hitlerite offensive, received the Headquarters directive about halting offensive operations and shifting to defend the lines they occupied. In connection with the fact that in such a short period of time the forces could not accomplish even a minimum amount of engineer work, regroup forces and create a grouping required for defense, the defensive operations of the forces covering the Moscow Axis began in an unfavorable situation, on poorly prepared terrain. As a result, the enemy broke through the strategic front, and a critical situation was created on the approaches to Moscow.

In order to restore the strategic front, the Headquarters was forced to transfer hastily here a number of large units from the Northwestern and Southwestern axes, as well as to commit new strategic reserves. As a result of energetic measures taken by the GKO and VGK Headquarters, by mid-October 1941 the Western Front was deployed on the Mozhaysk Line. The organization in a period of one week of an essentially new formation on the Moscow Axis, was an important factor in wrecking the October offensive of the German Fascist forces.

By the beginning of November 1941, a strategic grouping was created on the Moscow Axis, which included forces of the Western, Kalinin and Bryansk fronts, and the Moscow Defense Zone, equipped with a more substantial quantity of artillery and tanks, supported by aviation, and echeloned to a depth of up to 120 km. At the beginning of December the forces of these fronts halted the enemy offensive on the approaches to Moscow.

Restoration of the broken strategic front in summer 1941, under conditions of the continuing general withdrawal of substantially weakened Soviet forces, was achieved owing to the large strategic reserves of the VGK Headquarters. By 25 June 1941, when it became clear that the Hitlerites were making the main strike not on the Southwestern Axis, as the Soviet command supposed before the beginning of the war, but on the Western Axis, north of Polesye (Minsk, Smolensk, Moscow), the VGK Headquarters urgently began to move there seven armies (16th, 19th, 20th, 21st, 22d, 24th and 28th) to restore the broken front and reinforce the forces operating on the Moscow Strategic Axis.

According to a Headquarters order of 14 July, to secure the gap between forces of the Northwestern and Western axes from Staraya Russa to Olenino, the 29th and 30th armies, consisting of 10 divisions, were deployed, and to the east, in the areas of Torzhok, Rzhev, Volokolamsk, Kalinin, Ruza, Mozhaysk, Maloyaroslavets, and Naro-Fominsk, the 31st and 32d were completing their organization. Along with the previously moved up 24th and 28th armies, they combined into a front of reserve armies, with the mission to occupy line Staraya Russa, Ostashkov, Belyy, Istomino, Yelnya, Bryansk, and prepare for a stubborn defense. During the last 10 days of July the 14 divisions of the first echelon of this front were committed to battle to make a powerful counter-strike near Smolensk.

To restore the strategic front, broken by the enemy in the first days of the war on the Western Strategic Axis, the VGK Headquarters transferred five combined arms armies (36 divisions) to the Western Front during the period 27 June-10 July. Later, to create a large strategic grouping, an additional 13 combined arms armies (104 divisions and 33 brigades) were sent here.⁸

Possessing large reserves, the VGK Headquarters was able to restore the broken front on this axis a second time after the defeat at Vyazma and Bryansk. In September

1941, to increase the depth of the defensive grouping in the rear of the Western and Bryansk fronts, the Reserve Front was deployed on the Vyazma Defense Line, and in November forces of the Moscow Defense Line were deployed in the Moscow area. In all, from the start of the war until 1 December the VGK Headquarters sent 150 rifle divisions and 44 rifle brigades to the Western (Moscow) Axis. This constituted approximately 50 percent of all the strategic reserves committed to battle in the 1941 Summer-Fall Campaign.⁹ The front was also stabilized on the Leningrad and Kiev axes by the VGK Headquarters reserve. More than 140 rifle divisions and 50 rifle brigades were sent there.

The activeness of the defense, and the courage and staunchness of Soviet soldiers, had a considerable influence on solving the problem of restoration of the broken strategic front. Activeness of the defense was displayed in the continuous impact made on the enemy through air and fire strikes, maneuver by reserves and fire to the most threatened axes, and the conduct of counterattacks and counterstrikes.

Already at 2115 hours on the first day of the war the Main Military Soviet sent Directive No 3 to the forces, which indicated to the front military soviets the need to organize decisive counterstrikes to defeat the enemy groupings that had penetrated. Despite the most grave conditions of the border engagements, the counterstrikes had a certain result. On a number of axes of the Northwestern, Western and Southwestern fronts, the enemy offensive was detained from three to seven days. The operational headquarters of the German General Staff of the Ground Forces noted on 24 June that in the zone of Army Group Center Soviet forces had undertaken strong tank attacks from the area of Belostok. A few days later F. Halder wrote in his diary: "The stubborn resistance of the Russians is forcing us to wage battles according to all the rules of our field manuals. In Poland and in the West we could allow ourselves certain liberties and deviations from the principles of field manuals; now this is already impermissible."¹⁰

The Smolensk engagement was characterized by high activeness. In its defensive and offensive operations [deystviy] lasting two months (10 July - 10 September) were ably combined. For example, the transition to the offensive by the 21st Army on the left flank of the Western Front on 13 July, with the mission of moving to the enemy rear on the Mogilev - Smolensk Axis, was totally unexpected by the German Fascist forces. The divisions of the 63d Rfl Corps crossed the Dnieper successfully, seized the cities of Rogachev and Zhlobin, and attacked toward Bobruysk. To the south the 232d Rfl Div, 66th Rfl Corps, advanced up to 80 km and seized crossings on the Berezina and Ptich rivers. Simultaneously, the 67th Rfl Corps of the 21st Army, and units of the 13th Army held back divisions of the 2d German Tank Group on the Roslavl Axis.

The enemy encountered active opposition everywhere. The Soviet soldiers fought with the knowledge that the fascist hordes must be stopped at any price. All attempts by the Hitlerites to break through to Moscow and seize Leningrad smashed up against their courage and staunchness.

The Wehrmacht command recognized that the German army had confronted opposition on Soviet soil such as it had not encountered in any of the campaigns in the West. Fascist Gen E. Butler wrote after the war that "as a result of the stubborn resistance of the Russians, already in the first days of the battles the German forces suffered losses in personnel and equipment that were substantially higher than those they had known from their experience of campaigns in Poland and the West. It became entirely obvious that the method of waging combat operations [deystviy] and the combat spirit of the enemy... were entirely unlike those the Germans encountered in previous "lightning wars."¹¹

The magnificent heroism of the Soviet soldiers played a major role in undermining the strike force of the German Fascist Army, and steadily reducing the rates of advance. But, in the first 18 days of the war the German Fascist forces advanced an average of 20-30 km per day, and in September-October 1941 (except for individual axes) it declined to 3-6 km per day. In early December the German Fascist forces made their last attempt to break through to Moscow, but, having exhausted their offensive capabilities, began to shift to the defense.

Restoration of the broken strategic defensive front presented an exceptionally complex problem. More than five months of intense combat were required in order to knock down the enemy offensive tempos, halt him and create conditions for shifting to the counteroffensive. In the conflict that developed the front and rear were fused into one.

The practical solution of the problem was complicated to a significant degree by the lack of theoretical works concerning strategic defense. On the eve of the war all of our manuals and instructions were permeated with the idea of active offensive operations [deystviy]. In the draft 1939 Field Manual it was written: "The Union of Soviet Socialist Republics will answer any enemy attack with a crushing strike by all the might of its armed forces... We will wage war offensively, with the most decisive goal of total defeat of the enemy on his territory..."¹² The theoretical calculations and training practice of forces and headquarters derived from the premises that in the course of the war the Soviet Armed Forces would not have to resort to protracted, large scale defense. The operations [deystviy] by the forces would absolutely be solely offensive and continuously successful in nature from the very outset. It was anticipated that

the defense would be waged only on an operational-tactical scale. Necessary attention was not paid to questions of organization and conduct of strategic defense, and it was necessary to solve them during the already begun war.

The stationing of a large portion of the air fleet and military supply depots in the immediate proximity of the new border, in accordance with pre-war theory, led to a situation in which already in the first hours of the war 26 airfields in the Western Special Military District, 23 in the Kiev, 11 in the Baltic, and 6 in the Odessa Military District were subjected to attacks. Overall losses were approximately 1,200 aircraft. By mid-July; i.e., after less than a month of war, 200 depots with fuel, ammunition and weapons were on seized territory. MSU A. M. Vasilevskiy wrote in this regard: "It was inadvisable to build airfields and locate military supply depots in the immediate proximity of the new border in 1940-1941. The General Staff, and persons directly in charge of supply and supporting the lives and combat activity of the forces in the People's Commissariat of Defense, considered it most advisable to have the main reserves at the start of the war a bit farther from the state border, on approximately the line of the Volga River. Some officials from the People's Commissariat Headquarters (especially G. I. Kulik, L. Z. Mekhlis and Ye. A. Shchadenko) categorically objected to this. They believed that aggression would be quickly repulsed and the war in all cases would shift to enemy territory..."¹³

Restoration of the broken strategic defensive front became possible owing to leading role of the CPSU, and its ability to raise up the masses to fight the fascist invaders, to unite foreign and domestic policy, science, and all human and material resources into one whole, and subordinate them to a single goal—to stop the enemy, bleed him white, and create conditions for a shift to the counteroffensive.

Due to its particular importance, restoration of the broken strategic front was the prerogative of the supreme military-political leadership. At joint sessions of members of the Central Committee Politburo, State Defense Committee, and VGK Headquarters, an overall assessment was given of the status of the Soviet-German Front, and an all-encompassing program of operations [deystiyi] to repulse the aggression was worked out. The VGK Headquarters, as the highest organ of strategic leadership of the armed forces in wartime, directly commanded and controlled the restoration of the defensive front.

Restoration of the broken strategic defensive front was achieved by an entire complex of measures. The main ones were mobilization of the country's resources to increase the combat effectiveness of the Soviet Armed Forces; creation of organs of strategic leadership; disclosing the main enemy strike axis; creating operational-strategic defensive lines and large defensive groupings;

using strategic reserves; and organizing strategic coordination. The activeness of the defense, and the courage and heroism of Soviet soldiers, played an important role.

The experience of the war regarding restoration of the broken strategic defensive front is extremely diverse. In studying it it is insufficient to know the historic events; it is necessary to comprehend thoroughly the conditions that caused this problem, and the ways and methods of solving them. Study of the past from the positions of Marxism-Leninism gives correct answers to many urgent questions of our day.

Footnotes

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4. "Voyennoye iskusstvo vo vtoroy mirovoy voynye (strategiya i operativnoye iskusstvo). Uchebnoye posobiye" [Military Art in World War II (Strategy and Operational Art). Training Aid], Moscow, Voyennaya akademiya Generalnogo shtaba, 1968, p 47.
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Southeast of Orel

00010037i Moscow VOYENNO-ISTORICHESKIY ZHURNAL in Russian No 7, Jul 88 (Signed to press 24 Jun 88) pp 61-65

[Article by Col (retired) F. K. Gavrikov*: "Southeast of Orel"]

[Text] At dawn on 12 July 1943 strike groups of the contiguous flanks of the 3d and 63d armies, Bryansk Front, shifted to the offensive from a bridgehead on the west bank of the Zusha River, west of Novosil. The Orel Offensive Operation had begun. The immediate mission of the first echelon of the 63d Army strike group, which consisted of four rifle divisions (129th, 348th, 287th and 250th)¹ was to break through the enemy defense on an 8 km front to a depth of 2-2.5 km, and move to line Matveyevskiy - Chernaya Gryaz (depth 4.5-7 km).² The 41st Rfl Div was to cover the remaining sector of the army defensive zone, which was not only its flank, but also the juncture of the Bryansk and Central fronts.³

During 12 July the 63d Army Strike Group wedged 6-7 km into the enemy defense. Lt Gen V. Ya. Kolpakchi, army commander, striving to expand the breakthrough frontage and build up the strength of the strike, on the 13th committed the 397th Rfl Div from behind the right flank.⁴ Hitler's command hastily transferred units of one infantry and one tank division that were in reserve to the gap that had formed. Repulsing their assault, the attackers recaptured positions one after another, and by evening advanced another 6-8 km. On the night of 13-14 July yet another division, the 5th Rfl Div, was committed to battle on the army right flank.⁵ On 15 July Sovinformburo reported: "...east of Orel our forces have broken through a strongly fortified enemy defensive zone on a front extending 30 km, and, overcoming stubborn resistance, advanced 20-25 km..."⁶

Units of the 41st Div in the first days of the Orel Offensive Operation continued to hold positions they occupied along the Neruch River, and actively conducted reconnaissance. Early on the morning of 20 July the 3d and 1st battalions, 139th Regt, defending on the right flank of the large unit, received the order to shift to the attack. They successfully crossed the river under enemy fire. Fighting in close coordination with their neighbor on the right (918th Regt, 250th Rfl Div), the soldiers of the 139th Rfl Regt liberated the populated areas of Sury, Vskhody, Krasnoye, Kalganovka, Kalininskiy, and Dubrovka on the west bank.⁷

In order to develop the success of the 139th Regt, Col A. I. Surchenko, the division commander, ordered the commander of the 244th Regt to shift to the attack. Under the cover of darkness two battalions of this regiment crossed to the west bank of the Neruch, and at dawn on 21 July five battalions of the 41st Div, along with their neighbor on the right, already attacked the enemy from the flank on the heels of the fire strike, attempting to cut off his withdrawal routes. The 299th Inf Div, whose command guessed this plan, began to withdraw. Having noticed this, defending subunits of the 102d Regt shifted to the attack, depriving the enemy of the opportunity to withdraw to its previously prepared line in an organized manner. Overcoming the enemy resistance, by day's end units of the 41st Div liberated 21 populated areas.⁸ The 102d Regt was withdrawn to second echelon and occupied the defense at the juncture with the 48th Army, and the 244th Regt occupied its offensive sector. The Hitlerites dug in on the previously prepared line, which ran along the eastern slopes of the commanding heights.

At noon on 22 July, carrying out a 20 minute fire strike against the combat formations of the 1st Bn, operating on the right flank of the 244th Regt (Capt M. Ye. Bykov, commander), up to an infantry battalion of fascists shifted to a counterattack. The main strike fell on the 1st Rfl Co. When the enemy was 200 meters away, Communist Sr Lt I. I. Gayevoy, the company commander, issued the command to open concentrated fire from all types of weapons. Long bursts from light machineguns and automatic rifles merged with frequent rifle bullets and the dull explosions of 82 mm mortars. The enemy, suffering losses, withdrew. A half hour later, following an artillery strike, the enemy again counterattacked our positions, but with two infantry battalions. The subordinates of Capt Bykov, coordinating with soldiers of the regimental 122 mm Mortar Btry, forced the enemy to turn back. During the day the Hitlerites attempted to throw back the 1st Bn 13 times, but were unsuccessful. When the last counterattack bogged down, our subunits on the shoulders of the withdrawing enemy rushed his positions and occupied the commanding heights.⁹

Each soldier in the battalion fought bravely, courageously and ably. Sr Lt Gayevoy was wounded three times, but did not leave the battlefield, and continued to control the company. Private I. T. Lutovnin, a komsomol member, killed 13 fascists, including the crew of a light machinegun. Sgt A. Ya. Zavalishin, assistant platoon commander, personally killed three enemy soldiers.

Throughout the next day units of the 41st Div, overcoming stubborn enemy resistance, liberated nine populated areas and reached the east bank of the Optukha River with its lead subunit. On the left flank the 63d Army had success.

On the morning of 24 July the division command post moved from Usov to the village of Masalovka. An enemy air strike began as soon as the headquarters section

started working in the new location. For approximately two hours Ju-88s and Ju-87s bombed the village. Some of the residential houses and commercial structures were destroyed, and others caught fire. In this situation, P. T. Kuznetsov and F. A. Shirokov, senior sergeants in the separate signal company, continued to maintain radio communications with the KNP [command and observation post] and division units. Sr Lt Ye. A. Lazarev, chief of the repair shops of this company, along with his subordinates eliminated the damages to the wire signal lines, and when the central telephone stations (TsTS) was destroyed by a direct bomb hit, rushed to assist the victims. Having bandaged six wounded, he carried away to a shelter not only them, but also two radio stations.¹⁰

By day's end on 24 July, subunits of the 139th and 244th regiments had completely cleared the east bank of the Optukha of enemy. Ahead could be seen structures of the city-type settlement of Stanovoy Kolodez, which was approximately 20 km south of Orel. The Hitlerites were using the sector of the main rail line between these populated areas to maneuver forces and resources along the front. The settlement, which extended for 5-6 km, and the populated area of Khotetovo which was almost entirely adjacent to it, were situated on hills that controlled the surrounding terrain. On the west bank of the Optukha and the hills the fascists created a farflung network of foxholes, machinegun emplacements, and strongpoints.

In the middle of the night the division headquarters received combat order No 71/op [operation order] from the 63d Army commander, according to which a strike grouping consisting of the 287th, 250th and 41st rifle divisions was being created on the army left flank. The large units were assigned the mission of seizing Stanovoy Kolodez, and striking Orel from the southeast. Maj Gen V. G. Zholudev, 35th Rfl Corps commander, was to unite control of the actions of these divisions in order to accomplish the assigned mission. The mission to seize Khotetovo and Stanovoye, reliably securing the army left flank, was assigned to the 41st Div, reinforced by the 1311 Tank Destroyer Regt and 313th Gds Mort Regt.¹¹

The division commander, having listened to the proposals of his deputies, the chief of staff, and the artillery commander, and evaluated the situation, began the attack at 1300 hours. By this time the soldiers and sergeants were to have studied the terrain and the disposition of enemy fire weapons, and the unit and subunit commanders were to have organized the battle and coordination.

The next morning, following a soaking rain that night, was clear and looked completely unlike wartime. The first rays of the sun, sliding along the mirror-like surface of the Optukha, were refracted in a light fog that rose up from the river, and began to shine brightly in it. It was also quiet beyond the river. After 1000 hours the Hitlerites began to shell the positions of the division units periodically from 6-tube mortars, and light and heavy

machineguns. Our side kept silent. The fascists apparently got the impression that in the past days the attackers had become spent and were not able to resume the attack. They settled down. Over the Optukha and farther beyond it all the way to the Orel-Kursk rail bed again reigned quiet uncommon for the front.

At 1300 hours a hail of rounds and mortar shells suddenly rained down on the Hitlerite position, after which a volley of a regiment of guards mortars (katushas) resounded. The battalions of the division first echelon shifted to the assault immediately following the explosions, crossed the Optukha, tore into the forward edge and, overcoming the enemy resistance, continued to move forward. Ground attack aviation pilots rendered much assistance and support to the infantry at this time. Our Ilyushin (called "black death" by the Fascists) circled over the battlefield in groups of nine, bombing and suppressing by machinegun fire targets indicated by the rifle subunits with the help of signal rockets and tracer bullets.

Coordinating with the aviation and artillery, the 2d and 3d battalions, 139th Regt, knocked the enemy out of the first trench by 1600 hours and seized the village of Ragozino. Up to two infantry battalions shifted to counterattacks five times, but each time met the fire of medium machineguns, automatic rifles, anti-tank riflemen, and mortarmen. At 1700 hours the regiment commander committed the second echelon battalion to combat, and immediately after the explosions of rocket rounds ended the regiment tore into the second trench, captured more than 30 and killed more than 100 soldiers and officers. That same day subunits of the 244th Regt also crossed the Optukha. They seized the western part of the village of Nikolskoye. Having encountered the most stubborn enemy resistance, the regiments were forced to dig in on the line achieved.

For three days bloody battles occurred on the small sector of Orel land. The Hitlerites wanted to hold Stanovoy Kolodez and Khotetovo at any cost. Every hillock changed hands several times. The ground shook from the explosions of aerial bombs and rounds, shrieked under the tracks of tanks and assault guns, and reddened from the shed blood. Riflemen, automatic riflemen, machinegunners, anti-tank riflemen, artillerymen and mortarmen fought to the death. Sgt P. Ye. Kozhemyakin, commander of a squad in a foot reconnaissance platoon of the 244th Regt, on the night of 25-26 July made his way to the village of Davydovo with his squad, acquired valuable information and sent it with a runner to headquarters, and himself occupied the defense with the rest of the reconnaissance personnel. As soon as the subunit shifted to the attack, his group suddenly opened automatic weapons fire from the flanks. Skillfully changing positions among the houses, the reconnaissance troops created the appearance that the enemy was surrounded, and thereby contributed to his destruction in the village. PFC P. P. Mogilnikov, number one crewman of a medium machinegun, from the 1st Bn of this same

regiment, moved the flanks and supported the rapid crossing of the river by fire from his "Maksim." Then, having changed his firing position, he successfully disposed himself in the combat formation of the left flank company, and together with the other soldiers repulsed three counterattacks, personally killing 12 Hitlerites.

Sr Sgt A. R. Prokopchuk, party organizer of the 7th Co, 139th Regt, during the battle for the village of Ragozino replaced the platoon commander who had been knocked out of action, and after some time also the seriously wounded company commander. The courageous communist ably led the repulsing of the enemy attacks. The Hitlerites persistently attempted to turn the tactically advantageous hill. Privates P. Romakov and L. Kizyunov, the surviving communists, Private A. Kuznetsov, a komsomol member, and non-party member Private K. Mamerkulov, led by the valorous party organizer, held off the onslaught for several hours and held their position until the arrival of reinforcements.¹²

A gun crew from the 132d Arty Regt, headed by Sgt R. Yesimbayev, supporting subunits of the 139th Regt, to repulse a counterattack rolled the gun out of a gun pit and killed several dozen Fascists by direct fire of fragmentation shells, forcing the rest to withdraw.¹³ A squad of the 1st Rfl Co, 244th Regt, led by PFC V. T. Smagin, was one of the first to reach the south edge of Khotetovo. The soldiers seized three houses and held them stubbornly. Communist privates first class O. Akhmedzhanov and M. Bondarchuk, anti-tank rifle gunners, who were located in the combat formations of the rifle subunit, suppressed three enemy machineguns by fire from their anti-tank rifles, which contributed to the successful attack on Khotetovo by the riflemen.

The stubborn battles for this village lasted until dark, and on the night of 27-28 July the enemy began to withdraw his main forces, pursued by subunits of the 139th Regt, which seized the northern edge of Khotetovo at 0730 hours. Maj Ya. I. Pavlenko, the regiment commander, arrived, summoned the battalion commanders, and detailed the combat missions to the subunits. At this time, a Ferdinand assault gun moved out from behind the slopes of a hill and fired approximately 10 rounds. Maj Ya. Pavlenko was seriously wounded by fragments of one of the rounds. His deputy, Maj A. A. Shavshunov, took command of the regiment. At 1400 hours, following a 15 minute fire strike, the battalions of this regiment resumed the attack and, having advanced two km, dug in west of Khotetovo. The 244th Regt attacking on the left, having overcome strong enemy resistance, seized the village of Zarya.

A driving rain fell the afternoon of the 27th and all that night. The field roads turned into mush. Movement of artillery and transport of ammunition was extremely hampered, and bullets, rounds and mortar shells were running out. The regiment, which had suffered substantial losses in the 10 days of continuous battle (in the

majority of rifle companies 30-40 percent of the men remained, and company and platoon commanders had been knocked out), received the mission to consolidate on the lines achieved.

By morning of 29 July the division commander's observation post (KNP) had moved to the western slopes of the unnamed hill a kilometer west of Khotetovo. The fleeing enemy had abandoned the trench and two dugouts there, and from there the combat formations of the first echelon regiments could be seen well. The division commander, having left the chief of the operation department in charge at the KNP, left along with the chief of the political department and artillery commander for the rear control post, where Maj Ya. I. Pavlenko, 139th Regt commander, who had died of his wounds, was buried. At approximately 1100 hours the enemy conducted a 10 minute fire strike, after which up to one and a half infantry battalions, supported by Ferdinand assault guns, counterattacked the 139th Regt. Personnel at the division KNP could see well as, on almost a two km long front, a chain of Hitlerites approached the regiment subunits, which had not yet succeeded in digging in on the line achieved. From our side short machinegun bursts and infrequent rounds from a 76 mm regimental gun moved up into the infantry combat formations could be heard. The chief of the operation department ordered the division artillery group (DAG) commander to open fire. He assigned a similar mission to Capt V. Ignatov, commander of a battalion of guards mortars, who was located at the KNP. Soon several rounds exploded in front of the enemy chain, which did not cause the counterattackers any tangible damage. They continued to move forward. The guns fell silent. There was nothing to fire; the crews had expended all existing rounds. The guards mortarmen operated energetically in the critical situation that had taken shape. At the command of Capt Ignatov, "First—to battle," after about five minutes four uncovered combat vehicles came in sight on the hill. They deployed on line without a halt, having stopped some 50 meters from the KNP. In an instant fiery arrows pierced the sky. Having carried out the salvo, the vehicles concealed themselves as rapidly as they had appeared. The Hitlerites, who had moved into the attack, began to rush about in panic and turned back. Pursuing them, soldiers of the 139th and 244th regiments rushed forward. The soldiers overtook the withdrawing enemy and tore into the southeast edge of Leontyev, having gotten astride the highway to its south. Developing the success, they occupied the Navornyy farmstead and, approaching all the way up to Olovyanikovo, on order began to consolidate on the line achieved. In the afternoon bullets, grenades, mortar shells and rounds were delivered to the regiments.

The next five days division units continued to wage stubborn battles. On the night of 29-30 July, having suffered heavy losses, the 139th Regt was replaced by the 102d, which had been in second echelon. At 1430 hours, following an artillery strike, first echelon units shifted to

the assault, and, overcoming enemy resistance, liberated Kozinovka, Leontyev, and Olovyanikovo. The next day up to two infantry battalions of Hitlerites counter-attacked twice, but were met by salvos from guards mortars, and artillery and small arms fire, and were forced to withdraw, suffering losses. Having regrouped during the night, our regiments at dawn resumed the offensive. By day's end on 1 August the 102d Regt reached the east bank of the Rybnitsa River. Subunits of the 244th Regt liberated five populated areas, and, having crossed the Rybnitsa from the line of march, seized a bridgehead on its west bank.

The high offensive fervor of the soldiers was constantly maintained by active, specific party political work. Each pause was used to hold talks about the just completed battle with analysis of its results, and about the situation in other sectors of the front. The latest reports from Sovinformburo and current newspapers were read, meetings were held, and the feats of soldiers and sergeants who had especially distinguished themselves, and their experiences, were popularized. Division soldiers who had displayed courage and valor entered the ranks of the VKP(b) [All-Union Communist Party (of Bolsheviks)]. From 5 July through 25 August 554 statements requesting admission into the party, and 244 into the komsomol were submitted. By day's end on 2 August the 102d Regt, having occupied a bridgehead on the west bank of the Rybnitsa, was preparing to break through the intermediate defensive line, and the 244th was expanding the seized territory.

On 3 August an address from the Bryansk Front Military Soviet was brought to all division personnel. It appealed to the soldiers, sergeants and officers to speed up forward movement and more quickly liberate Orel, which was 6-10 km away. In response to the appeal by the front military soviet the soldiers reinforced their onslaught. Units of the 41st Div on the night of 3-4 August broke through the intermediate defensive line, and by 1600 hours reached the east bank of the Oka in the area of Knubr and Khomut. At 0440 hours forward detachments of the right flank 5th and 129th rifle divisions, 63d Army, broke through to the east edge of Orel and street battles broke out. The other large units of the army first echelon had approached right up to the city. On the night of 4-5 August, while stubborn battles were underway in the streets of Orel, the battalion of Capt A. I. Atyuskin (102d Regt) crossed the Oka and occupied the village of Kuznetsa. By morning the ancient Russian city Orel was completely cleared of Hitlerites. At 2400 hours, Moscow, the capital of our homeland, saluted the valorous soldiers who had liberated Orel and Belgorod with 12 artillery salvos from 120 guns.

Listening on the troop radio sets to the excited voice of Levitan, who read the order of the supreme commander-in-chief on the first salute in the history of the Great Patriotic War, the division soldiers seemed to experience anew the events of the past month, which seemed to them incredibly long and difficult, due to the stubborn

battles to break through the deeply echeloned enemy defense, and the daily losses of combat comrades and friends. At the same time, the results summoned pride in the soldiers and officers for their contribution to the cause of defeating the German Fascist invaders.

Footnotes

- * In the period described the author was chief of the operations department, 41st Rfl Div headquarters.
- 1. "TsAMO SSSR" [USSR Central Ministry of Defense Archives], Folio 420, Work 11057, File 177, p 15.
- 2. V. A. Belyavskiy, "Strely skrestilis na Shpreye" [Arrows Crossed on the Spree], Moscow, Voyenizdat, 1973, p 87.
- 3. The division included the 102d, 139th and 244th rifle regiments, 132d Arty Regt, 117th Separate Tank Destroyer Arty Bn, and other units and subunits.
- 4. "TsAMO," Folio 420, Work 11057, File 177, p 16.
- 5. Ibid., p 17.
- 6. PRAVDA, 15 July 1943.
- 7. "TsAMO," Folio 139th Rfl Regt, Work 241550, File 1, p 10.
- 8. Ibid., Folio 420, Work 11057, File 369, p 226.
- 9. Ibid., Folio 1137, Work 1, File 6, p 11.
- 10. Ibid., Folio 25, Work 2, pp 169, 226, 261.
- 11. Ibid., Folio 420, Work 11057, File 18, p 46.
- 12. Ibid., Folio 1137, Work 1, File 6, p 15.
- 13. Ibid., p 13.

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Air Defense of Major U.S. and Japanese Ship Groupings

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[Article by A.S. Nikolayev: "Air Defense of Major U.S. and Japanese Ship Groupings"]

[Text] World War II convincingly demonstrated the great capabilities of aviation in achieving the goals of armed conflict at sea. The combat operations of the USA and Japan in the Pacific Ocean Theater may serve as an example [deystviya] of this. Analysis of the experience of these military operations [deystviya] showed the need

for effective air defense of ship groupings, and especially of task forces, which included the main classes of surface warships, including aircraft carriers and assault transport vessels.

Not a single major operation [operatsiya] in this theater lacked participation of aviation, which operated during all stages of the operations [operatsii]. During these operations naval forces almost always operated under continuous threat from the air, and suffered substantial losses from enemy aircraft. The Japanese fleet lost 50 percent of its main classes of warships from combat operations [deystvii] by American aviation.¹ U. S. carrier-based aviation alone destroyed 66.6 percent of all heavy and light aircraft carriers, 20 percent of all escort aircraft carriers, 55 percent of all battleships, 53 percent of the heavy cruisers, 30 percent of the light cruisers, and 23 percent of the destroyers lost by Japan.²

Japanese aviation also inflicted substantial damage to U. S. Navy warships. It caused more than 50 percent of the overall losses of the main classes of U. S. Navy warships in the Pacific Theater, including more than 70 percent of the light and heavy, and 60 percent of the escort aircraft carriers.³

Shipboard fighters were the main means of air defense of ship groupings at sea. They covered the ships from a status of air alert or flight deck alert.⁴ Throughout the war, based on experience of combat operations [deystvii] and the expected threat, taking into account its duration and intensiveness, the process of optimizing the aircraft fleet of aircraft carriers took place, for the purpose of making successful strikes against enemy naval and ground targets, and repulsing his air attacks. Shipboard anti-aircraft artillery also played an important role in air defense.

Deriving from the accepted periodization of World War II and the specific nature of combat operations [deystvii] in the Pacific Theater, it is advisable to divide the development of U.S. and Japanese air defense forces and resources during this war into two stages: the first stage from the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor on 7 December 1941 until the end of 1943, and the second stage from the beginning of 1944 until the end of the war.

The first stage is characterized by the creation of bases for building up air defense forces and resources of the ship groupings of the two sides. This involved intensive scientific research efforts in the field of radar, creation of fire control devices, construction of new ships and strengthening anti-aircraft weapons, as well as seeking ways to organize the most effective air defense.

The second stage was distinguished by significant quantitative growth and qualitative development of the air defense forces and resources of primarily U.S. Navy ship groupings. The reason for this was the buildup of the number of ships and the aircraft fleet of the American Navy, and mainly his aircraft carrier forces. For the U.S.

this stage was characterized by gaining and holding firm air and naval superiority, extensive use of the continuously improving shipboard radar stations, introduction of radars on aircraft, and improvement on this basis of the organization of the air defense of its ship grouping. Under these same conditions, despite the appearance of the first series-produced radar stations on Japanese ships, the capabilities of the Japanese Fleet to provide air defense support of its ship groupings was sharply curtailed, mainly as a result of the substantial losses in mid-1944 of aircraft and experienced carrier aviation pilot cadres. The substantial lag of the Japanese economic and scientific-technical base behind those of the U.S. was the cause of many Japanese failures in military operations [deystvii] at sea, including the weak air defense of the ship groupings of the Japanese Navy. These circumstances were exacerbated by grave defeats on the Soviet-German Front by Hitler's Germany, Japan's leading partner in the coalition, in alliance with which the Japanese militarists had counted on winning the war.

In the first stage, the Americans as a rule included one or two aircraft carriers in a ship grouping, which, if enemy aircraft were detected, maneuvered independently of one another to a distance of approximately 10 miles. Each of them was in the center of a 1-4 mile radius circular formation.⁵ It was believed that enemy attention and efforts were thus scattered, and the probability of destroying two aircraft carriers at once was reduced. Japanese Navy ship groupings contained approximately the same number of aircraft carriers in this stage.

In the second stage, a ship grouping included up to five independently operating aircraft carrier groups, each of which as a rule had 3-4 aircraft carriers and more than 10 screening ships, and was structured in a circular formation with a radius of up to four miles. Battleships and cruisers, which were assigned the main mission of providing air defense to the aircraft carriers, concentrated around them at a distance that provided freedom of maneuver, convenience in weapons employment and control of the ships. When air attack was threatened the destroyers proceeded toward the battleships and cruisers. A value of such a disposition was the fact that its combat formation provided high density of anti-aircraft fire during enemy air attacks from any relative azimuth, and if necessary (evasive actions from enemy attacks, support for takeoff or landing of aircraft) could be changed by turning each ship, maintaining optimal dispersal, perimeter observation of sea and air, and combining the requirements of various types of defense.⁶

After its official entry into the war, the U.S., making use of the experience of military actions in the Atlantic, rapidly reinforced the air defense weapons of its ships⁷ and stepped up the introduction of scientific and technical achievements in the navy. At the outset of the war all U. S. Navy ships of main classes were equipped with radar stations for detecting aerial targets, and had fighter aircraft control and guidance posts. Ship groupings

included light air defense cruisers, armed with general purpose 127 mm guns. The employment of rounds with proximity fuses by the Americans from January 1943 increased the effectiveness of shipboard anti-aircraft artillery fire.⁸

The existence of radar stations on U.S. Navy ships substantially improved reconnaissance of enemy aircraft. It became possible to warn ships in the grouping about the threat of air attacks in a timely manner via intra-squadron communications, take the necessary steps to repulse the enemy air strike, and, most importantly, employ carrier-based aviation on the distant approaches. As a rule, these measures included takeoff of the maximum possible number of fighters to repulse the attack, restructuring the grouping into the appropriate air defense disposition, and bringing shipboard anti-aircraft weapons to full readiness.

Visual observation was throughout the war an important element in the system of reconnaissance of enemy aviation, especially for detecting low-flying targets.

Either one of the aircraft carriers, or, on instructions of the flagship, one of the other ships in the task force, accomplished the function of fighter air control and guidance ship in the American groupings. The control and guidance post of this ship accomplished centralized control of the actions of shipborne fighter aircraft. Fighter aviation zones of action were designated, taking into account the scheme for anti-aircraft fire by the shipboard artillery. The required number of fighters was allocated for carrier strike group aircraft escorts, air alert, and to repulse an enemy air attack, and the number of reserve fighters was determined.

This post maintained radio communications with the guidance officers in the aircraft carrier groups, and controlled the movement of fighters among the groups. In a number of cases control of the fighters was transferred from one aircraft carrier group to another. The fighter guidance officer of each carrier group implemented general control over the actions of his group, and allocated interceptor aircraft for the individual ships.⁹

This air defense organization of a large ship group was demonstrated by the Americans in June 1944 during a battle in the Mariana Islands. In order to improve the effectiveness of reconnaissance of enemy aircraft, in this battle the Americans moved two destroyers equipped with powerful radar air target detection stations from a ship grouping to the threatened axis. This made it possible to detect Japanese aircraft at a distance of up to 150 miles from the combat nucleus of the ship grouping, and to intercept enemy aircraft at a distance of from 10-100 km from the American aircraft carrier. Out of four Japanese strike groups (328 Japanese aircraft) sent during 19 June 1944 to strike the 58th Aircraft Carrier Task Force (15 aircraft carriers, 7 battleships, 8 heavy and 13 light cruisers, 69 destroyers, and 956 aircraft, including 475 shipboard fighter aircraft) more than 200

aircraft were destroyed by American shipboard fighters and shipboard anti-aircraft artillery. Only a small number of the Japanese aircraft were able to break through to the American ships and cause them very insignificant damage.¹⁰

Subsequently, movement of distant radar detection destroyers (DRLO) to the threatened axis became widely practiced in the U. S. Navy, and substantially enhanced the effectiveness of reconnaissance of enemy aviation, and the air defense of ship groupings.

One of the most experienced commanders of the carrier group, squadron or flight, named in each specific instance, directly controlled the actions of the fighters in the air. However, the lack of precise control of shipboard fighters in the air and of appropriate coordination between fighters and anti-aircraft artillery on the ships in the first stage did not always make it possible to stop enemy air attacks.

The Japanese, lacking radar stations in the first stage of the war, were forced to rely strictly upon visual observation. As opposition from the enemy increased, the techniques and methods of organizing air defense of the Japanese ship groupings no longer could provide reliable cover from air attack. Thus, during the battle at Midway Atoll on 4 June 1942, 50 undetected American dive bombers from the aircraft carriers Enterprise (33 aircraft) and Yorktown (17 aircraft) suddenly appeared at high altitude above the Japanese aircraft carriers. Not having encountered opposition either from fighters or from shipboard anti-aircraft artillery, they almost simultaneously made a strike against Japanese aircraft carriers (Kaga), (Akagi) and (Soryu). As a result of direct hits by the bombs and the fires that followed, all three aircraft carriers sank.¹¹

From the end of 1942 the Japanese began to divide their ship grouping into two groups: main and diversionary. Both of these groups, as a rule, had aircraft carriers in their composition, and the diversionary group moved approximately 100 miles ahead of the main group. It was to divert enemy aviation onto itself, and support the making of a decisive strike by aircraft of the main group.

Insofar as possible both sides also attempted to use land based fighter aviation for air defense of ship groupings. This was especially true in basing areas and on coastal lines of communication. However, they did not achieve effective results in this matter. One of the reasons for the failures was the limited number of island airfields.

Nevertheless, the Americans acquired a certain positive experience in providing air cover of a carrier ship grouping by land based fighters. Thus, during strikes made by carrier based aviation against the Japanese naval and air base of Rabaul on 5 and 11 November 1943, air cover of fighter ship groupings was carried out by U.S. Marine Corps fighters based at airfields on nearby islands. Their pilots could land on the aircraft

carriers, refuel their aircraft and supplement their ammunition. This made it possible to provide continuous air cover of the ships.¹²

Subsequently, in connection with actions by shipboard groupings in ocean areas remote from island airfields, and the rapid buildup of U.S. carrier forces, such practice of using land based fighter aviation was employed to a very limited extent. Aircraft carriers made it possible to concentrate substantial shipboard air forces in areas of operations [operatsii], and to provide sufficiently reliable air defense of ship groupings.

The Japanese Navy, which achieved major successes at the start of the war, paid little attention to improving the air defense of its ship groupings.

In addition, by the end of 1944 the Japanese Navy had lost a substantial number of aircraft carriers¹³ and was almost entirely deprived of experienced carrier aviation flight cadres. This significantly reduced the air defense capabilities of the Japanese Navy ship groupings. The ships could use mainly anti-aircraft artillery, and a very limited amount of land and ship based fighter aircraft.

Thus, during the Battle of the Philippine Sea in October 1944 the Japanese ship groupings, which had weak air defense, were crushed by the American Navy, the main strike force of which was the 38th Carrier Task Force, which included 17 aircraft carriers, 6 battleships, 14 cruisers and 58 destroyers.¹⁴ As a result, the Japanese ship grouping could not accomplish its assigned mission of destroying American assault forces in the Leyte Gulf.

The sharp buildup of U.S. carrier forces in the Pacific Theater in 1944 made it possible to include 15 or more aircraft carriers in the American ship groupings. The organization of air defense of U.S. Navy ship groupings received further development with the entry into the inventory in early 1944 of shipboard fighters equipped with radars. A detachment of night fighters equipped with radar stations began to operate in the carrier groups of American heavy aircraft carriers from that time on. The simultaneous increase in the number of fighters in carrier groups of American heavy aircraft carriers from 36 to 54, and by the end of 1944 even to 73,¹⁵ made it possible to employ a flight consisting of four fighters as the main tactical entity, while until 1944 the fighters operated in pairs.¹⁶

The use of kamikaze pilots by the Japanese in October 1944 forced the U.S. Navy command to change the tactics of American aircraft carrier aviation, and to seek more effective methods of combating enemy aircraft. The Americans began to carry out more frequently comprehensive exercises of repulsing air attacks. Techniques and methods used by the Japanese were employed, in order to uncover the vulnerable and weak places in the air defense of the ship groupings and seek ways of eliminating them. Carrier task groups of the American carrier force, operating according to a single

plan several dozen miles from one another, strove to ensure effective air defense of the entire area of operation [operatsiya], both in daytime and in the hours of darkness.

Distant radar detection destroyers began to move out to a distance of approximately 60 miles from the ship grouping in the direction of the greatest threat, in order to detect enemy aircraft in a timely manner, warn their ships, and guide fighters on air alert and on the carrier decks. Shipboard fighters carried out air alert above the DRLO [distant radar detection] destroyers insofar as possible. Moreover, shipboard fighters were used to combat low-flying targets (within the range of visual visibility from ships of the group at altitudes up to 1,000 meters). Aircraft returning to the aircraft carriers after making strikes against enemy targets had special corridors designated.¹⁷

To gain air superiority in the area of the operation [operatsiya], carrier task groups conducted protracted combat operations [deystviya] to destroy enemy aviation on airfields and in the air even before the start of the operation [operatsiya]. This substantially reduced the effectiveness of the Japanese air strike against the ship groupings during the operation [operatsiya] itself. However, in connection with the kamikaze threat, when strikes were made against airfields in the Philippine Islands the Americans attempted to include a small number of shipboard fighters in the carrier strike groups. The majority of them were to be on aircraft carriers in order to repulse possible enemy attacks.¹⁸

In 1945 the Americans gained permanent superiority in the air and at sea. This factor, as well as fuel shortages, prevented the Japanese Navy from going to sea, and a ship grouping led by the battleship Yamato that risked going to sea (one battleship, one light cruiser, eight destroyers), deprived of air cover, was destroyed on 7 April 1945 by U. S. carrier based aviation.¹⁹

Thus, the quantitative buildup and qualitative improvement of aircraft carriers, shipboard aircraft, escort ships and their weapons enabled the Americans to create in the second stage a sufficiently effective air defense system for their ship groupings. This system, in the opinion of American military specialists, most fully demonstrated itself during the assault operation [operatsiya] to seize the island of Okinawa (March-June 1945). Air defense of the U.S. Navy ship groupings, being an integral part of the struggle for air superiority in the area of operations [operatsii], was accomplished in the form an air blockade of the entire area of the operation [operatsiya]. It was carried out according to a unified plan and under a unified command. The foundation of the means of aerial reconnaissance of the situation of this air defense system were 16 special DRLO ships, refitted destroyers, which formed two radar detection rings (radii of 55 and 130 km) around the area of the assault landing. Each DRLO ship covered from four to 12 fighters.²⁰ When enemy aircraft were detected, the guidance posts called for

additional shipboard fighters and guided them to the air targets. Target designations were also transmitted to other ships in the event the Japanese aircraft flew out of the zone of responsibility of the given DRLO ship.

In this operation [operatsiya] American carrier aviation repulsed 896 attacks by Japanese aircraft, and along with shipboard anti-aircraft artillery, destroyed approximately 4,000 enemy aircraft (including 1,900 kamikaze aircraft, which in the period 6 April-22 June 1945 carried out 10 massive strikes against the U. S. Navy ship groupings. There were 28 American ships sunk and 225 damaged, of which 26 sank and 164 were damaged as a result of kamikaze actions.²¹ An average of 10-20 kamikaze aircraft were necessary for each destroyed ship. Ninety percent of the kamikaze aircraft missed their targets or were knocked down, and an average of approximately 1.25 hits were required for each destroyed ship.²²

American specialists frequently use these calculations today with appropriate adjustments to determine probable losses in possible combat actions without the use of nuclear weapons, in case of enemy use of anti-ship missiles against modern ship groupings. Experience in the organization of air defense of ship groupings was generalized and carefully analyzed by U.S. Navy specialists in the course of World War II and in the postwar period. It continues to be studied today, and is reflected in the aggressive plans of the U.S. and its allies.

Footnotes

1. "U. S. Strategic Bombing Survey. Summary Report: Pacific War," Washington, GPO, 1946, p 11.
2. N. Polmar, "Aircraft Carriers," New York: Garden City, 1969, p 471.
3. "Combat Employment of Aircraft Carriers: Topical Collection," Translated from the English, Moscow, Voyenizdat, 1973, pp 336-337; "United States Naval Chronology: World War II," Washington, GPO, 1955, pp 20-160.
4. These are methods of holding crews and aircraft at a given degree of combat readiness. Air alert is the highest degree of readiness, when fighters are flying in an established area (zone) in order to destroy enemy aircraft at the distant approaches to a ship grouping. Flight deck alert, which has several degrees of combat readiness, made it possible to accomplish combat takeoffs in a timely manner, quickly build up forces in the air, substantially economize aviation fuel, and rest flight personnel. The task force commander determined the alert procedure and degree of combat readiness, based on the anticipated threat (see "Sovetskaya Vojennaya Entsiklopediya" [Soviet Military Encyclopedia], Vol 3, Moscow, Voyenizdat, 1977, p 127).
5. Circular formation is a certain order of structuring warships (vessels), under which their mutual disposition is precisely regulated according to axes and distance from the center of the disposition or guide ship.
6. F. S. Sherman, "American Aircraft Carriers in the War in the Pacific," abbreviated translation from the English, Moscow, Voyenizdat, 1956, p 62.
7. The anti-aircraft weapons of American battleships that entered the inventory during the war consisted of 20 127 mm guns, from 16 to 80 40 mm and 16 to 60 20 mm automatic guns. On aircraft carriers, cruisers and destroyers it was strengthened mainly by adding 40 mm and 20 mm automatic guns. On Japanese Navy ships anti-aircraft weapons were represented mainly by 127 mm, 80 mm, and 76 mm guns, 40 mm and 20 mm automatic guns, and anti-aircraft machineguns.
8. On 6 January 1943 in the area of the Solomon Islands, the cruiser (Yelena) knocked down a Japanese torpedo carrier with a two gun volley, using for the first time rounds with proximity fuses.
9. "The Combat Use of Aircraft Carriers," p 182.
10. Ibid., pp 173, 202.
11. Ibid., pp 128-130; A. R. Hezlet, "Aircraft and Seapower," London: P. Dowies, 1970, p 247; N. Polmar, "Aircraft Carriers," p 221.
12. "The Combat Use of Aircraft Carriers," p 56; F. S. Sherman, "American Aircraft Carriers in the War in the Pacific," pp 162-163; N. Polmar, "Aircraft Carriers," p 324.
13. From the beginning of the war until the end of 1944 the Japanese lost 19 aircraft carriers: 6 in 1942, 1 in 1943, and 12 in 1944 (see "Combat Use of Aircraft Carriers," p 357).
14. "Istoriya vtoroy mirovoy voyny" [History of World War II 1939-1945], Vol 9, Moscow, Voyenizdat, 1978, p 310.
15. "United States Naval Aviation 1910-1970," pp 119, 123, 134.
16. P. Barjot, "Histoire de la guerra aeronavale," Paris: Flammarion, 1961, p 329.
17. S. E. Morison, "History of United State Naval Operations in World War II," Vol 13, Boston: Little, Brown, 1959, pp 55, 59.
18. N. Polmar, "Aircraft Carriers," pp 405-406.
19. "Istoriya vtoroy mirovoy voyny 1939-1945," Vol 11, Moscow, Voyenizdat, 1980, pp 70-71.

20. Ibid., p 71.
21. "United States Naval Aviation in the Pacific," p 40.
22. S. J. Deitchman, "General Purpose Military Forces of the 1980s and Beyond," Boulder, Colorado: Westview Press, 1979, p 101.

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70th Anniversary of Legendary Iron Infantry Division

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[Article by Col (retired) I.N. Pavlov: "Legendary Iron Infantry Division (70th Anniversary of its Creation)"]

[Text] At the beginning of summer 1918 the military and political situation in the middle Volga region had worsened. At the end of May the White Czechs seized Syzran, and on 8 June Samara. On 22 July the enemy occupied Simbirsk, and as a result in the area of Sengiley and Belyy Yar the Sengiley and Stavropol groups of Red Detachments were cut off from units of the 1st Army, Eastern Front. These detachments united into a composite detachment under the command of G.D. Gay. V.I. Pavlovskiy became his deputy. The detachment broke out of encirclement and on 25 July linked up with 1st Army forces in the area of Mayna Station (55 km west of Simbirsk). In these days work was being carried out here under the leadership of M. N. Tukhachevskiy to organize regular Red Army units and large units.

On 26 July 1918, the first composite Simbirsk Inf Div was created by order of the 1st Army revolutionary military soviet, based on the Sengiley-Stavropol detachment. On 27 July Gaya Dmitriyevich Gay (real name Gayk Bzhishkyan) was named its leader. On that same day he took command and began organization of the large unit.¹ B.S. Livshits became the first military commissar of the division. Bolshevik N.F. Panov headed the political department, and the Latvian infantryman E.F. Vilumson headed the staff.

In August division units began an attack on Simbirsk. However, they did not succeed in liberating the city due to strong resistance from the Whites. In the beginning of September the division prepared for new battles for the city. The 3d (212th) Moscow Regt entered the division. Each day party political work was intensified. The process of creating communist cells in the units took place. The first cell was organized in the 2d Simbirsk Regt, where the Samara Bolshevik N. M. Shvernik was military commissar.

The Simbirsk Operation [operatsiya] by the 1st Army began on 9 September 1918. On 12 September, as a result of three days of intense battles, the division liberated Simbirsk of the White Guards. That same

evening a meeting of the 1st Army soldiers was held on the central square of the city, which today bears the name of V.I. Lenin. At the meeting the text of a telegram to V.I. Lenin was composed, which stated: "Dear Vladimir Ilich! The taking of your home city is in response to your one wound, and Samara will be for the second!" In response V.I. Lenin congratulated the Red Army soldiers on their victory, and thanked them in the name of all the workers.

On 28 September, the day the Simbirsk Operation concluded, the 1st Composite Simbirsk Iron Inf Div, first among Red Army large units, was awarded the Honorary Revolutionary Red Banner, established by the VTsIK [All-Russian Central Executive Committee] in summer 1918.²

At the beginning of October 1918 the division liberated Syzran and Stavropol-Samarskiy, and took part in the battles for Samara. For its successful operations, by order of the republic RVS [Revolutionary Military Soviet] it received the name Samara (on 25 October 1921), and later Samaro-Simbirsk (on April 1922).

The 1st Simbirsk Div, renamed the 24th Rfl Div, waged battles in November 1918 in the area of Buzuluk, Buguslan and Belebey. In those days G.D. Gay was named 1st Army commander. V.I. Pavlovskiy took command of the 24th Rfl Div.

On 22 January 1919 the division liberated Orenburg, and a month later Orsk. In March-April the regiments repulsed an attack by Kolchak's forces. From 28 April through 4 August the Iron Div, as an element of the 1st and Turkestan armies, took part in the counteroffensive by the Southern Group, and then, in the ranks of the 5th Army, took part in the Zlatoustovsk and Chelyabinsk operations. During this time it fought its way approximately 800 km, and liberated the Beloretskiy and Yuryuzanskiy factories, Verkhneuralsk, and Troitsk from the White Guards. For their successful operations to defeat Kolchak's units, the 208th, 209th, 211th, 212th, 213th, 214th and 215th regiments were awarded Honorary Revolutionary Red Banners.

In spring 1920 the situation in the west worsened sharply. After being shipped by rail, the division entered the forces of the Western Front in the Gomel area, and then north of Kiev became subordinate to the 12th Army, Southwestern Front, and took part in the liberation of the cities of Chernobyl and Mozyr. Later, operating in the ranks of the 1st Cav and 14th armies, it liberated the cities of Lutsk and Sokal. In these battles the soldiers displayed mass heroism. The 216th imeni V.I. Lenin Regt, which entered the division in October 1919, distinguished itself with particular bravery.

In July 1920 the soldiers warmly bade farewell to the ailing Vasiliy Ignatyevich Pavlovskiy, with whose name were linked the successes of the Iron Div on various fronts. M.V. Muretov took command of the large unit.

After the end of the war with Poland, the Iron Div, as part of the Kiev Military District, was stationed in the area of Derszhnya, Zhmerinka and Gaysin, and fought against the Petlyura Bands.

During the Civil War years the well known internationalists S.A. Chastek, D.A. Varga, and P.M. Borevich fought in the Iron Div. From the ranks of the large unit went commanders, scientists and political figures who became known in the country. Among them were M.D. Velikanov, commander of the Central Asian and Transbaykal military districts; A.I. Sedyakin, who worked as RKKA [Workers' and Peasants' Red Army] deputy chief of staff from 1933-1935; academicians A.A. Blagonravov and Kh.S. Goreglyad, M.A. Purkayev, and A.V. Gorbatoev, who became army generals and prominent military leaders; and N. M. Shvernik, chairman, USSR Supreme Soviet Presidium during 1946-1953.

The soldiers and commanders of the 212th Moscow imeni V.I. Lenin Regt in February 1922 elected Ilich an honorary Red Army soldier, swearing an oath to hold high the name of their great fellow regimental soldier. At the end of 1922 the Iron Div shifted to regimental tables of organization. The three brigades were transformed respectively into the 70th Cherkassy, 71st Simbirsk, and 72d Petrograd rifle regiments.

Year after year the quality of military and political training improved and the combat readiness of the unit rose. The forms of political indoctrination work were also perfected. The men were brought up on examples of the lives of heroes of the Civil War. By USSR RVS Order No 725 of 24 November 1925, Ya.F. Fabritsius, 17th Rfl Corps commander, was confirmed in the rank of honorary Red Army soldier of the 72d Leningrad Regt. By Order No 258 of 20 April 1926, the USSR RVS confirmed I.E. Yakir, Ukrainian Military District commander, in the rank of honorary Red Army soldier, 70th Cherkassy Regt, and G.D. Gay, student at the RKKA Military Academy imeni M.V. Frunze, as honorary Red Army soldier of the 71st Ulyanovsk Regt.³

The services of the Iron Div in the years of the Civil War were assessed highly by the Soviet Government. In February 1928, marking the 10th Anniversary of the RKKA and for its great services on various fronts of the Civil War, the Iron Div was awarded a second Honorary Revolutionary Red Banner.⁴ In the days of celebration of the 15th Anniversary of the RKKA in February 1933, for the valor it displayed in the Civil War period, and for a number of glorious victories at Simbirsk, Samara, Orenburg and Aktyubinsk, the division was awarded the Order of the Red Banner.⁵ In the years of peaceful training the large unit justified these awards with honor. According to the results of competition that developed among units and large units of the Ukrainian and Belorussian military districts, in 1934 the Iron Div was recognized as one of the best rifle divisions in the Red Army.⁶

For their able work of training and indoctrinating the men, the following individuals entered their names forever in the history of the division: A.P. Pokrovskiy (1921), assistant commander, 210th Regt, later colonel general and assistant chief of the general staff for military scientific work; I.S. Konev (1924) commander, 72d Rfl Regt, and later a marshal of the Soviet Union; Ye.Ye. Maltsev (1935), company political commissar, 70th Regt, future army general and chief of the Military Political Academy imeni V.I. Lenin. In 1937-1938, battalion commissar A.S. Zheltov, a future colonel general and chief of the Main Political Administration of the Soviet Army and Navy, was division military commissar.

In November 1937 the 24th Rfl Div was redeployed to the Karelian Isthmus, and entered the 7th Army, Leningrad Military District. In September 1939, the 70th, 71st and 72d regiments were renamed the 7th, 168th and 274th rifle regiments respectively. The Iron Div withstood severe testing in battles on the Karelian Isthmus. After the death of the commander, Brigade Commander P.Ye. Veshchev, Division Commander K.N. Galitskiy, who had been through the harsh school of military life, took command.

For its exemplary accomplishment of the military tasks of the command in the Soviet-Finnish War, and the valor and courage displayed in so doing, by edict of the USSR Supreme Soviet Presidium of 11 April 1940 the 24th Div was awarded a second Order of the Red Banner. Brigade commander Petr Yevgenyevich Veshchev was posthumously awarded the title Hero of the Soviet Union. Private N.M. Berendeyev, a reconnaissance soldier in the 160th Arty Regt; I.Z. Drebota, squad commander in the 168th Rfl Regt; I.M. Komarov, a private in the 274th Rfl Regt; S.V. Semin, gun commander in the 7th Rfl Regt; and private I.M. Ulyanov, reconnaissance soldier in the 168th Rfl Regt, also earned the Gold Star of a hero.

The Great Patriotic War found the Iron Div in the area of Molodechno, BelSR. On 25 June, as an element of the 13th Army on line Traby-Subbotniki (40 km northeast of Lida) it won a meeting engagement with the enemy 19th Tank Div, and held this line until 29 June. But by this time some of the forces of the Western Front, including the Iron Div, found themselves surrounded. A raid through the enemy rear areas began. The regiments made their way through to the east, making strikes against the German columns, and frustrating their systematic advance to Mogilev. On 14 July 1941 the Iron Div broke out of encirclement, and in the area of Ozarichi linked up with 21st Army forces. Soon Maj Gen K.N. Galitskiy was named commander of the 67th Rfl Corps.

The whole country learned about the heroic feat of the Samara-Ulyanovsk soldiers. On 10 August 1941 the newspaper PRAVDA in a lead article, "Military Art,

Multiplied by Bravery," wrote: "Maj Gen Galitskiy led two thirds of the men out of encirclement, inflicting substantially greater losses on the enemy than he suffered himself."

However, the joy of the soldiers was darkened by the fact that the division did not have its Military Colors. At the end of June in battles in the area of Volozhin a detachment commanded by Sr Political Commissar A.V. Barbashev, instructor in the political department, found itself isolated from its units and could not break through to the division. It was forced to wage heavy battles and withdraw to the east, moving 200 km north of the division main forces. Maj Gen K.N. Galitskiy, with forces of the cavalry squadron of Sr Lt Ye.A. Vedenin, took resolute steps to seek out the color-bearing detachment, but was unable to find it. The fate of the division military colors was learned only in 1943.

At the beginning of September 1941 the Iron Div became subordinate to the 21st Army, which was transferred to the Southwestern Front. Events developed quickly. From the area of Terekhovka Village (40 km southwest of Gomel) the regiment withdrew to the area of Bakhmach. On 15 September forces of the Southwestern Front right flank, where the 24th Div was also operating, found themselves surrounded. Many units and subunits were lost. Their soldiers fulfilled their duty to the homeland to the end. Under these circumstances, at the end of December 1941, by order of the people's commissar of defense, the division was eliminated from the Red Army composition.⁷ According to records of the General Staff, the first formation Iron Div is listed as lost in combat.

The war continued. The internal military districts carried out a tremendous amount of work to create new units and large units. In December 1941 organization of the 412th Rfl Div began in Archangel Military District. In January 1942 it was renamed the 24th Rfl Div with unit numbers of the former Iron Div. Col F. A. Prokhorov took command.

Until August 1942 the division, as an element of the 3d Shock Army, fought at Velikiye Luki, and then, entering consecutively the 65th, 57th, 1st Gds, and 37th armies, took part in the Battle of Stalingrad, the Belgorod-Kharkov and Donbass offensive operations, and fought at Krivoy Rog. At the end of 1943, as an element of the 18th Army, 1st Ukrainian Front, it accomplished difficult missions in the Zhitomir-Berdichev Offensive Operation.

On 5 January 1944 Berdichev was liberated. In an order from the supreme commander-in-chief of 6 January, Maj Gen F. A. Prokhorov's 24th Rfl Div was named among the forces that distinguished themselves. By this same order it was awarded the honorary name Berdichev.⁸

This fact is interesting in the glorious history of the Iron Div. At the beginning of October 1943 units of the 38th Rfl Corps, 50th Army, Bryansk Front, occupied the

village of Anyutino, Cherikovskiy Rayon, Mogilev Oblast. The battle had barely died down, when a local resident, 63 year old kolkhoz peasant Dmitriy Nikolayevich Tyapin arrived at the corps command post and told about events that had taken place in August 1941. Then, during burial of three fallen soldiers, he detected the Military Colors, wound around the chest of one of the soldiers. The old man lay the colors in the grave. This report stirred the corps command.

Dmitriy Nikolayevich led the corps headquarters defense platoon to the fraternal grave. The soldiers carefully began to dig it out. Then a shovel struck something. They began to shovel out the dirt with their hands and saw a rotted rucksack, and in it a red cloth. They carefully unfolded it. On the top were the words sewn in silk: "USSR Central Executive Committee." Below could be made out with difficulty: "24th Iron Div." No documents were found with the buried soldiers. But from the remnants of the service blouse of one of them was taken Order of the Red Banner No 10046. Later it was learned that this order belonged to Sr Political Commissar Aleksandr Vasilyevich Barbashev, the political department instructor of the Iron Div.⁹

By decision of the People's Commissar of Defense, for preserving the glorious combat traditions of the old Red Army Iron Div, after restoration its military colors were awarded to the 24th Rfl Berdichev Div, which was renamed the 24th Rfl Berdichev Samaro-Ulyanovsk Twice Red Banner Iron Div.¹⁰ For preserving the military colors, D.N. Tyapin was entered permanently on the rolls of the 1st Co, 7th Regt, and was awarded the Order of the Red Banner.¹¹

In connection with the 25th Anniversary of the victory of the Soviet people in the Great Patriotic War, Sr Political Commissar A.V. Barbashev was posthumously awarded the Order of the Patriotic War First Degree. A street in the village where he was born was named after him.

In winter 1944, while repulsing an enemy counterattack in the area of Satanov, Sgt P.A. Makarov, anti-tank gun commander and battery party organizer, perished in an unequal battle, having destroyed six tanks. For this feat, accomplished on the Satanov-Gusyatin Road, he was posthumously awarded the title Hero of the Soviet Union. Today one of the streets of Satanov bears the name P.A. Makarov.¹²

On 8 April 1944, for exemplary accomplishment of the missions of the command in battles to liberate the city of Chernovtsy, the division was awarded the Order of Suvorov Second Degree. With joyous excitement, pride and a feeling of respect toward the working people of Romania, the soldiers entered the territory of that country, whose people were betrayed by its corrupt rulers. On 3 April they occupied the city of Seret. For exemplary accomplishment of the missions of the command in battles against the German Fascist invaders on the

foothills of the Carpathians, for moving to the southwestern state border, and for the valor and courage displayed in so doing, the USSR Supreme Soviet Presidium, by edict of 18 April 1944, awarded the division the Order of Bogdan Khmelnitskiy, Second Degree.

In the Lvov-Sandomir Operation [operatsiya], in the area of the city of Kolomyia in a battle at Cheremkhov Village, Private V.P. Mayborskiy, of the 5th Co, 7th Regt, gravely wounded, repeated the feat of A. Matrosov. The enemy DZOT [earth-and-timber pillbox] fell silent. The offensive continued successfully. V.P. Mayborskiy was picked up unconscious by medics. After lengthy treatment the soldier was released from the hospital. In Moscow, when the victory salute had already rang out, he was awarded the Order of Lenin and the Gold Star. In 1985 V.P. Mayborskiy was listed as an honorary Red Army soldier of the regiment in which he had served.

In the beginning of August 1944 the Iron Div occupied Skole. Subsequently, as an element of the 18th Army, 4th Ukrainian Front, it took part in the Carpathian-Uzhgorod, Western Carpathian, and Moravsko-Ostrava Operation. The soldiers, fulfilling their international duty, displayed mass heroism in negotiating the Sredneveretskiy Pass, and liberating the cities of Trebishov, Levocha, Liptovski-Sventi-Mikulash, Turzovka and Rozhnov. At the end of the Great Patriotic War the large unit took part in the Prague Strategic Offensive Operation, and ended its combat campaign in May 1945 in the vicinity of the Moravian city of Letovice.

During the Great Patriotic War the soldiers of the division withstood the harshest tests, displayed mass heroism, high patriotism, and moral staunchness in the battles. Gratitude was expressed in 20 orders of the supreme commander-in-chief to the men of the division. In 11 of them the division number and its commander, Maj Gen F.A. Prokhorov were mentioned. For personal bravery, courage and valor in the battles, 8,965 soldiers, sergeants and officers were awarded orders and medals. Msgr P.Ye. Ilin, and sergeants I.A. Koshelev and I.Ya. Koshel became full bearers of the order of glory. Maj Gen F.A. Prokhorov and sniper D. Alikulov earned the Order of Lenin.¹³

On 24 June 1945 the Victory Parade was held on Red Square in Moscow. A composite regiment of the 4th Ukrainian Front bore 35 military colors of large units and units that had most distinguished themselves in the battles for the homeland. Among them were the military colors of the Iron Div.¹⁴

The war in the West came to an end. The Iron Div returned to the homeland and stood guard to defend the peaceful labor of the Soviet people. The older soldiers were returning home. Destiny scattered them throughout our immense country. A soviet of division veterans maintains communications with groups of fellow soldiers living in 27 cities. All of them in their home areas

are conducting important useful work in the military-patriotic indoctrination of young people. Many veterans are in the ranks of the workers.

The workers of Ulyanovsk, the homeland of Illich, sacredly preserve the memory of its valorous soldiers. Here is Iron Div Street and Gay Boulevard. On 12 September 1968, on the day of the 50th Anniversary of the liberation of Simbirsk from the White Guards, an eternal flame of glory was lit on the bank of the Volga in front of the memorial to fallen heroes, in honor of the soldiers of the Simbirsk Iron Div. In a green oak grove near Okhotnichya Station, on 12 September 1972 a memorial complex was opened, a monument marking the battles for Simbirsk. In Buguruslan in November 1967 a monument of glory was erected in honor of the heroes of the Buguruslan and Belebey operations, during which the regiments of the Iron Div distinguished themselves by particular bravery. In the villages of Trava and Survilishka (BeSSR), where the Iron Div fought at the start of the Great Patriotic War, burial mounds to the combat glory of the Samaro-Ulyanovsk soldiers were erected. In Krivoy Rog, Leningrad School No 232, and Moscow School No 401 museums of combat glory have been created, where the feats of the soldiers of the Iron Div are reflected.

Footnotes

1. "TsGASA" [Central State Soviet Army Archives], Folio 1307, Work 2, p 15.
2. "Grazhdanskaya vyna i voyennaya interventsiya v SSSR: Entsiklopediya" [The Civil War and Military Intervention in the USSR: Encyclopedia], Moscow, Sovetskaya Entsiklopediya, 1987, p 469.
3. "TsGASA," Folio 4, Work 3, File 2593, p 354; File 2899, pp 171-172.
4. Ibid., Folio 3316, Work 23, File 451, p 3.
5. Ibid., Work 13, File 21, topographic reprint.
6. Ibid., Folio 25899, Work 34, File 107, p 163.
7. "TsAMO" [Central Ministry of Defense Archives], Folio 1098, Work 1, File 1, p 16.
8. See: "Prikazy Verkhovnogo Glavnokomanduyushego v period Velikoy Otechestvennoy voyny Sovetskogo Soyuza" [Orders of the Supreme Commander in the Period of the Great Patriotic War of the Soviet Union], Moscow, Voenizdat, 1975, p 98.
9. "TsAMO," Folio 1098, Work 1, File 1, p 38.
10. Subsequently the name of the division was specified.
11. "TsAMO," Folio 1098, Work 1, File 1, p 8.

12. See B. G. Komskiy, and others. "Slavoy oveyanaya" [Covered With Glory], Saratov, Privilzhskoye knizhnoye izdatelstvo, 1979, pp 215-218.

13. "TsAMO," Folio 1098, Work 2, File 29, p 80.

14. Ibid., Folio 371, Work 6376, File 115, p 20.

History of the Organizational Development of the Soviet Armed Forces After the Great Patriotic War

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[Review by Maj Gen L.G. Ivashov, candidate of historical sciences, of book "Vooruzhennyye Sily SSSR posle voyny (1945-1986 gg.). Istorya stroitelstva" [The Armed Forces of the USSR After the War (1945-1986). A History of Organizational Development] by A.A. Babakov, Moscow, Voenizdat, 1987]

[Text] The history of the organizational development of the Soviet Armed Forces is an important and timely topic, which attracts the attention of researchers both in our country and abroad. The origin and establishment of the army and navy during the Civil War, their improvement and strengthening in the prewar years, and the development and growth of their combat might during the Great Patriotic War have been studied in most detail.

However, military historical works devoted to study of this problem have their "blank spots," especially in the field of organizational development of the Soviet Armed Forces in the postwar years. Therefore, the appearance of a fundamental work is so valuable, in which the military organizational activity of the CPSU and the Soviet Government in development of the USSR Armed Forces from the second half of the 1940s through the 1980s is examined comprehensively.¹

The rich and interesting factual material in the book shows convincingly that the U.S. and its NATO partners were the initiator of the arms race after the end of World War II. The peace loving policy of the Soviet State, and its desire to limit the arms race, met every time the stubborn desire of reactionary imperialist circles to achieve military superiority over the USSR. Therefore, the measures taken by the Soviet Union to strengthen its armed forces and enhance their military might and combat readiness that are examined in the work were forced and retaliatory in nature.

Chapter 1 discusses the measures of the Communist Party and Soviet Government directed at restoring and developing the economy, destroyed by the war, and transferring the armed forces to a peacetime status. The numerical strength of the armed forces was significantly reduced, and millions of soldiers returned to peaceful, creative labor. By 1948 a total of approximately 8,500,000 people were demobilized from the army and navy. The strength was reduced to 2,874,000 (page 30).

Meanwhile, the unleashing of the "Cold War" by the imperialists, and the further exacerbation of the international situation caused by the creation of the aggressive NATO military bloc in 1949, made it necessary for the Soviet Union to accomplish a number of measures to ensure the security of the country. The numerical strength of the armed forces was increased, and their level of technical equipping, combat effectiveness and combat readiness were enhanced.

The book shows well the results of the rearming of the army and navy in the first postwar years. The efforts rapidly to create a Soviet nuclear weapon in response to the "atomic blackmail" of the U.S. administration are particularly singled out. The convincing facts cited by the author indicate the forced nature of the activity of Soviet scientists to create nuclear weapons.

The government of the USSR did everything possible to prohibit the deadly new weapon and remove it from military arsenals. However, the U.S. leaders did not heed the voice of reason, hoping for their own monopoly in the nuclear field. These dreams were not to be realized. In a short period of time nuclear and thermonuclear weapons were developed in the Soviet Union, as were their delivery vehicles—ballistic missiles and strategic bombers. USSR possession of nuclear missile weapons made it possible to change fundamentally the entire appearance of the army and navy, as well as the organizational structure of the armed forces and views on the nature and methods of waging war under the new conditions. The subsequent increase in the defense capability of the Soviet State took place as its economic foundation steadily grew stronger, and the achievements of the scientific and technical revolution were introduced.

The readers will also be interested in the section about the postwar reorganization of the army and navy, the changes in the structure of military control organs, and the examination of questions of cadre training and the organization of party political work in the armed forces.

In Chapter 2 the author notes that the essence of the military and technical revolution in the fundamental restructuring of the Soviet Armed Forces was a "sharp, spasmodic transition to nuclear missile weapons, with corresponding new methods of achieving the strategic goals of the war" (page 73). The new weapon changed all previous views about the processes of preparing for and waging war, the role and importance of time and space, and theaters of military operations [deystviya] in it, and about the relationship of armed services and branches of arms required for combat and mobilization readiness.

Carrying out the revolution in military affairs, the Soviet Union attempted to defend its borders reliably and all the states of the socialist community. Relying on the advantages of the socialist economic system, and scientific and technical progress, the USSR reequipped of the army and navy with the most modern equipment, and improved armed forces organization and personnel

training and indoctrination. "In so doing," emphasizes A.A. Babakov, "the Soviet Union in no way slackened its efforts in the struggle for peace" (page 74).

Nevertheless, leading circles in the West, fulfilling the will of the bosses of the military-industrial complex, rejected the Soviet peace proposal. The book brings to light in detail the feverish activity of American imperialist circles to intensify the nuclear arms race, build up armed forces, and use them to support a hegemonic military-political policy. Guided by the aggressive doctrine of "massive retaliation," they developed powerful air forces, which at the beginning of the 1960s numbered approximately 1,900 long range and medium range bombers, capable of delivering to targets more than 4,700 nuclear bombs in one takeoff. Attempting to increase its military superiority, the U. S. was first to begin development of intercontinental ballistic missiles.

The doctrine of "massive retaliation," and the policy it gave rise to did not bring the American militarists the desired results. The creation in the USSR of powerful and reliable nuclear weapons carrying ICBMs toppled the foundations of U. S. strategy, since the territory of the United States became accessible for a retaliatory strike.

The aggressive aspirations of the U.S. and NATO countries forced the CPSU Central Committee and Soviet Government to take steps to strengthen the security of the USSR and the peoples of the fraternal countries. Reequipping of the Soviet Armed Forces on the basis of nuclear missile weapons was carried out rapidly. The creation of the Strategic Rocket Forces in 1959 was a powerful means of detouring the potential aggressor. Moreover, as the author notes, the appearance in the Soviet Armed Forces of a new and most important armed service, the Strategic Rocket Forces, lay a firm foundation for the establishment of military parity.

Simultaneously, questions of the organizational development of the other armed services were resolved. They were transferred to a qualitatively new material and technical base. The book contains an analysis of the development of the Ground Forces, Troops of Air Defense, Air Forces, and Navy. The changes taking place in the army and navy caused the evolution of their organizational structure, and increased the demands placed on the organs of military-political and strategic leadership and control.

A number of pages are devoted to discussing the formation of the Warsaw Treaty Organization in 1955, the organization that became a most important factor in the system of collective security of the socialist countries, and made it possible to unite their economic resources and political and military efforts to preserve peace and stability in Europe.

Chapter 3 concludes that by the end of the 1960s strategic military parity was achieved. It was the result of the tremendous efforts of the Communist Party and our people, of the scientific and labor feat of many Soviet scientists and designers, engineers and workers in the defense industry, of the courage of the researchers, and the selfless labor of army and navy personnel.

The scientific and technical revolution, and the major transformations in military affairs that it caused, became an important step in the organizational development of the armed forces, and led to intensification of the tendency toward equalization of the military-strategic capability of the two systems, socialist and capitalist. Thus, after the formation of an offensive strategic "triad" in the United States, in the second half of the 1960s the Soviet Union created similar forces of its own, also including intercontinental ballistic missiles, nuclear missile submarines, and strategic aviation. This was a forced measure in response to a threat coming from the U.S., and simultaneously a major step on the path to establishing parity, which demonstrated the urgent need for negotiations on reducing strategic weapons.

The direction of the organizational development of the Soviet Armed Forces in the 1970s was determined largely by the need to preserve strategic military equality between the two systems. The ABM Treaty, the Interim Agreement on Limitation of Strategic Weapons (SALT I) signed in 1972, and the 1979 SALT II agreement lay a firm foundation for halting the arms race and for a step by step reduction of nuclear arsenals on the two sides. However, subsequently the American administration disrupted the disarmament process, refused to ratify the SALT II Treaty, and ceased observing its main provisions.

Chapter 4 is devoted to the struggle by the Soviet Union in the 1970s and 1980s to preserve parity—the foundation of international security. Under the conditions of a new spiral in the arms race unleashed by imperialist circles in the U.S. and shifted into space, this activity was particularly important. The author directs the readers' attention to the fact that in this difficult situation the USSR in 1982 made a unilateral commitment to never be first to use nuclear weapons.

The 27th CPSU Congress formulated conclusions and postulates in the field of military organizational development that stemmed from the need for peaceful coexistence, under conditions of the new strategic situation in the world. The book notes that they included: maintaining equal security by political measures, and not military-technical means; developing criteria for and establishing an equal, reasonable size for the military capabilities of the two systems; providing for step by step elimination of nuclear weapons, and reductions of armed forces and military equipment up to the year 2000; creating an all-encompassing system of international security; proclaiming publicly the defensive nature and content of Soviet military doctrine, etc. In the

military doctrine of the Warsaw Treaty Organization published in May 1987 are embodied in concentrated form the new views on organizational development of the socialist armies, and problems of reducing weapons and preventing war, both nuclear and conventional. They were reflected in the organizational development of the Soviet Armed Forces.

The work emphasizes the dependence of defense might on the level of economic and socio-political development of Soviet society, and its ideological maturity. The author comes to a well-founded conclusion: our armed forces are improved taking into account the real international situation, the level of development of science and technology, and the interests of ensuring the security of its state and the countries of the socialist community. Both the socio-political and the organizational-technical side of organizational development of the army and navy are examined, and the dialectical interrelationship between them is disclosed. The section of the book devoted to the principles of organizational development of the USSR Armed Forces that stem from the Party Program and the decisions of the 27th CPSU Congress is of substantial interest.

The book also has some shortcomings. For example, greater attention could have been paid to certain questions directly associated with the history of the organizational development of the armed forces, especially to changes in the organic organization of the forces and in military training, in connection with the appearance of nuclear weapons, as well as to new aspects of party political work, the substantial improvement of organizational structure, control organs, etc.

It is virtually impossible to show thoroughly and in detail the entire complex range of military organizational development issues over the 40 postwar years within a single work. Therefore, a number of the theses raised in A. A. Babakov's book require further study, taking into account the requirements of restructuring.

In our view, it would also be advisable to give a thorough assessment of the unilateral substantial reduction in the army and navy carried out in the 1950s and early 1960s, which indicates the peace loving nature of the USSR. The opinion exists that a number of these measures were carried out hastily and were insufficiently thought through, which played a certain negative role in the organizational development of the Soviet Armed Forces.

We also have individual, page by page remarks. On page 39 can be found "oskolochnyye fugasnyye snaryady," [high explosive fragmentation rounds], and it should read: "oskolochno-fugasnyye." At the present time the term "protivotankovyye upravlyayemyye rakety" (PTUR) is employed, and not "protivotankovyye upravlyayemyye snaryady" [anti-tank guided rounds] (page 99). Page 101 speaks about the tank troops in the mid-1950s. But they began to be called this only in 1960 (from 1954 they were called the bronetankovyye

[armored] troops). The supersonic MiG-21 fighter (page 104) did not have a swept back, but a delta triangular wing. However, all of this does not reduce the great scientific and intellectual value of the work.

Overall, A. A. Babakov's book on the postwar organizational development of the USSR Armed Forces has enriched Soviet military historiography. It lay the basis for the thorough study of an interesting and important period in the history of our army and navy, which is very topical under present conditions. It would be desirable for further efforts in this field to be continued.

Footnote

1. A. A. Babakov, "Vooruzhennyye Sily SSSR posle voyny (1945-1986 gg.) Istorya stroitelstva" [The Armed Forces of the USSR After the War (1945-1986). A History of Organizational Development], Moscow, Voenizdat, 1987, p 287.

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